the weekly Standard

MARCH 31 / APRIL 7, 2008 • $3.95

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FRED BARNES

YIKES!

The credit crisis of 2008
BY IRWIN M. STELZER

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BY DAVID M. SMICK

Lessons from the New Deal
BY JAMES PIERESON

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

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Defaming FDR

The silver linings in any scandal, or so THE SCRAPBOOK has learned, are the more-in-sorrow-than-anger essays by friends and admirers of the person who's been caught with his hand in the till or sneaking out of the bedroom. Former New York governor Eliot Spitzer's affinity for prostitutes, and spectacular exit from office, has been no exception.

Here's Martin Peretz, editor in chief of the *New Republic*: "Eliot Spitzer is a friend of mine," he writes. "Not a close friend but a friend, nonetheless. He has written for TNR and TNR has written about him. I knew relatively little about his personal life until . . . " Can't wait to see where that one's going! By contrast, Harvard Law School's ubiquitous Professor Alan Dershowitz, writing at *Forward.com*, offers a more-in-anger-than-sorrow perspective: "When Eliot Spitzer was my research assistant in the 1980s," he says, "he was a young man of great brilliance, high integrity, conservative demeanor and enormous promise. It pains me deeply to see him brought down so far, and so quickly, by private sexual misconduct."

According to Dershowitz, Spitzer was publicly humiliated not by his appetite for $5,000-an-hour whores while prosecuting prostitution rings but by the fact that "our nation, unique among Western democracies, is obsessed with the private lives of public figures." This is followed by various Dershowitzian assertions that "we are a nation of hypocrites" that has never learned "how to distinguish between sin and crime, between activities that endanger the public and harm only the actor and his family."

Of course, reasonable people will differ as to whether the loss of a man of "great brilliance, high integrity, conservative demeanor and enormous promise" like Spitzer is a tragedy or comedy; but there's no doubt where Dershowitz stands on public and private morality in hypocritical America.

The Scrapbook's main beef with Dershowitz, though, is that he clinches his case with the following two sentences: "Throughout our history, men in high places have engaged in low sexual activities. From Thomas Jefferson to Franklin Roosevelt to John Kennedy to Lyndon Johnson to Bill Clinton, great political figures have behaved like adolescent boys in private, while at the same time brilliantly and effectively leading our nation in public."

We'll leave the defense of Bill Clinton, LBJ, JFK, and Thomas Jefferson to their respective admirers. But the notion that FDR behaved like an adolescent boy in the White House—"engaged in low sexual activities"—is an appalling urban myth which, like J. Edgar Hoover's cross-dressing, has achieved the status of historical fact.

It is true that Franklin Roosevelt had an affair—possibly sexual, although no one really knows—with his wife's social secretary, Lucy Mercer; but it took place in 1918, more than a dozen years before FDR was elected president. And far from behaving like lovesick adolescents, Roosevelt and Mercer (who married someone else shortly thereafter) quickly went their separate ways when Eleanor Roosevelt offered FDR a divorce and Roosevelt's mother threatened to disinherit him. Roosevelt chose his responsibilities to his wife and five children over the pursuit of happiness with Lucy Mercer.

It is true that, as president, the paraplegic FDR invited Lucy Mercer to the White House on several occasions during World War II (always when Eleanor was out of town) but such visits were entirely chaste, in the presence of his daughter Anna and innumerable friends over cocktails and dinner—and, in spirit and practice, could not have been more different from Bill Clinton's furtive encounters with Monica Lewinsky, or Eliot Spitzer's transactions with Ashley Alexandra Dupré, alias "Kristen." ♦

McCain's Non-Gaffe

Last week in Amman, Jordan, John McCain said he was concerned that Iranian agents were "taking al Qaeda into Iran, training them, and sending them back." McCain went on to say that "al Qaeda is going back into Iran and receiving training and . . . coming back into Iraq from Iran. That's well known, and it's unfortunate." Whereupon Joe Lieberman, traveling with McCain, leaned over and whispered something into the presumptive Republican presidential nominee's ear. After which McCain said, "I'm sorry, the Iranians are training extremists, not al Qaeda."

The press seized on the moment, treating it as a gaffe that cut to the heart of McCain's candidacy. "The mistake threatened to undermine McCain's argument that his decades of foreign policy experience make him the natural choice to lead a country at war with terrorists," two *Washington Post* reporters huffed on one of the paper's blogs. The *Wall Street Journal*'s Elizabeth Holmes called it a "stumble." "Iran and al Qaeda are associated with different branches of Islam," she wrote. "Iran is a mostly Shiite country and al Qaeda is primarily a Sunni militant group; Iran has been reported to help Shiite extremists in Iraq, but not their Sunni counterparts."

Not exactly. McCain was right and

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(Classic Steiner, reprinted from our issue of October 2, 2000)

shouldn't have taken Lieberman's cue; there is a long trail of evidence pointing to Iranian cooperation with al Qaeda. And this evidence has been documented by the very same media that have indicted McCain for pointing out the connection. On April 11, 2007, for example, the *Washington Post* reported on a briefing delivered by General William Caldwell in which the general said, "We have, in fact, found some cases recently where Iranian intelligence services have provided to some Sunni insurgent groups some support."

Hmm. Maybe reporters should read their own papers before saying McCain had made a "gaffe." ♦

Oops, Wrong Hillary

The reporter for the Mahoning Valley *Tribune Chronicle* in Ohio must have thought he had the scoop of a lifetime: an exclusive interview with Hillary Clinton. Oops. The paper issued a correction on March 19:

> It was incorrectly reported in Tuesday's *Tribune Chronicle* that Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton answered questions from voters in a local congressman's office.
>
> Reporter John Goodall, who was assigned to the story, spoke by telephone with Hillary Wicai Viers, who is a communications director in U.S. Rep. Charlie Wilson's staff. According to the reporter, when Viers answered the phone with "This is Hillary," he believed he was speaking with the Democratic presidential candidate, who had made several previous visits to the Mahoning Valley. The quotes from Viers were incorrectly attributed to Clinton. . . . Clinton on Monday was in Washington, according to her Web site. ♦

Annals of Neoconservatism

Assistant Secretary of Transportation for Policy Tyler Duvall, 35, is a "little pointy-headed neocon with grand ideas about the future of transportation, and they all involve tolling. . . . He's bright, young, energetic—just totally wrong, and has a bizarre, neocon view of transportation." (Democratic congressman Peter DeFazio of Oregon in the March 17, 2008, *Washington Post*.) ♦

Reuters Truthers

In the course of a report on the latest audiotape from Osama bin Laden, datelined Dubai, Reuters explains to readers that "the Saudi-born militant leader" is the man "blamed for the September 11 attacks on U.S. cities." What a curious formulation: Why not simply "responsible for the September 11 attacks on U.S. cities"? Does the Brit wire service think there is some unsolved mystery here.? Or is this simply a stylistic crotchet favored for some reason by Reuters's Dubai bureau? ♦

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Casual

Secondhand Rows

I've been a collector of odd volumes, the builder of a library, a stalwart of secondhand book shops, for as long as I can remember. Among my earliest memories are sitting—patiently, I like to think—on the floors of stores, long since gone, while my father perused the stock. By the time I could read, and had money to spend, I would climb into one of Washington's buses and head to the old secondhand neighborhood of downtown—now largely subsumed by the Verizon Center—and browse.

Browse, that is, because my allowance was not designed to support a collecting habit. I can still remember the mingled excitement and frustration I felt, in early December 1963, when I found a first edition of *The Great Gatsby* for $10 at the old Benjamin Franklin Book Shop on Pennsylvania Avenue. Excitement for the obvious reason; frustration because, in those days, ten bucks was a princely sum—to me, in particular. I related the experience to my parents that evening, and a few weeks later on Christmas morning, my father (who was not prone to such gestures) made a present of the slender green volume to me.

Mentioning the Benjamin Franklin (at the corner where the Navy Memorial now stands) reminds me of the dozens of shops that survive now exclusively in my memory: Loudermilk's, the premier antiquarian shop in Washington, the Estate Book Store, on H Street near the White House, old Mrs. Reifschneider's lair at 19th and Sunderland Place, the Savile on P Street in Georgetown, the old Salvation Army shop near Union Station, now paved over by Interstate 295.

Like many collectors, I associate cities I know well—Richmond, London, Nashville, Nicosia, Baltimore, Oxford, Los Angeles, Berlin, Providence—with favorite shops, and other places almost exclusively with bookstores: Cincinnati, Düsseldorf, West Chester (Pa.), Schwerin, Menlo Park (Calif.). My late father-in-law, who taught medicine for a living and accumulated rich antiquarian volumes for pleasure, once warned me, only half-jokingly, that book-collecting "is a *disease*." He was right, of course; and I have since concluded that the only cure, the only sure antidote to excess, is morbid obesity.

DARREN GYGI

In my defense, I should explain that my collecting has been largely confined to certain subjects—18th-century English literature, the history of Virginia, King Edward II, beagling, Max Beerbohm, T.S. Eliot, modern British political history, psychoanalysis, the poet John Clare, William Faulkner, *Piers Plowman*, Wilhelmine Germany, biographies of Episcopal bishops, etc.—and that the content of the volumes is what matters, not their market value or gilded binding. (Indeed, to universal horror, I remove all dust jackets.) This cannot necessarily be said of most collectors. I have generally avoided the rarefied world of first editions and the like, and since there is a finite amount of space in my residence, I strive to discard volumes with the same alacrity that I acquire them. Still, my study now features rows of books two deep in the shelves, and vertical piles in odd corners of the room.

I mention all this as background to an epiphany I experienced a few weeks ago. I arose early on a Saturday morning and, as I have once a year for decades, drove with cash, checks, credit cards, and mounting anticipation to the annual Washington Antiquarian Book Fair, held in an unprepossessing hotel ballroom in Arlington, overlooking the Potomac River. The scene was almost exactly as it had been a year earlier: The familiar dealers were standing in their booths (smiling at me, as my wife likes to say, in cruel anticipation), and hundreds of customers in late middle age—mostly males with gray beards and checked woolen shirts, fugitives from coin shows—milled anxiously about the room.

Yet, as I stood perusing the goods, I felt a sudden, unaccustomed sense of detachment, and it hit me: After half-a-century of sustained acquisition, I may have reached the saturation point. Many of the titles were remembered from earlier shows. I felt some slight interest, but no great urgency, to purchase this and that. Or to put it another way, I may very well possess every (affordable) volume pertaining to Edward II, so for the time being there is nothing to add to my collection.

I would like to say that this yielded a feeling of accomplishment or sense of satisfaction; but what I felt, instead, was a curious uncertainty. What next? Do I now begin rearranging my library, oiling bindings, or compiling a catalogue? Shall I never again make a pilgrimage to Baldwin's Book Barn? Or, as my alluring wife likes to ask, when I am called to the great antiquarian shop in the sky, what's to be done with all these damn books?

Philip Terzian

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Debating School Choice

In celebrating *City Journal* editor Sol Stern's school choice "apostasy" ("Schoolyard Brawl," March 17), Daniel Casse dismisses as "doctrinaire" several pro-choice responses to Stern, suggesting that neither reason nor evidence informs them. It is in fact Stern and Casse, however, who are unwilling to let evidence get in their way.

They begin by massively understating school choice progress. Casse repeats Stern's assertion that choice exists in only the "tiny voucher programs" of Cleveland, Milwaukee, and Washington, D.C. But there are actually 21 voucher or education tax-credit programs in 13 states, and more than 4,000 charter schools in 40 states and the District of Columbia. These programs are currently too small and heavily regulated to produce powerful market forces, but it is ridiculous to imply that no progress has been made.

The flip side of Casse's argument is that effective reform will require some sort of "national or state curriculum." But this would ratchet up just the sort of centralized, government control that has long driven standards down! Of course it has: Teacher unions, administrators, and bureaucrats spend oodles of time and money—resources parents can't match—playing politics because their livelihoods come from the system, and lax standards make their jobs easier. That's why Massachusetts is the only state Stern can point to as having effective standards, and now even those are under fire.

If anyone has ignored reality it is Stern and Casse. Unfortunately, they did so to smear the most proven reform of all: a system that takes power away from politicians and bureaucrats, lets consumers pursue high standards, and makes providers compete for their business.

Neal P. McCluskey
Washington, D.C.

Daniel Casse leaves out almost all of the really important points made by Sol Stern's critics, focusing instead on side issues. The serious flaws in Stern's case deserve a hearing.

Stern's article was riddled with factual errors, as Jay Greene's *City Journal* online article documents. Once these errors are corrected, much of his case collapses. For example, contrary to Stern's assertion, since the Supreme Court blessed school choice in 2002, numerous new programs have been enacted, taking us from 11 total school choice programs to 21. These programs now allow almost 190,000 students to attend private schools using public funds, up from about 70,000 at the time the court ruled—all because of the tremendous political success of school choice. The new programs are still coming; Georgia enacted one last year, and a second one is now moving through the

Georgia legislature. School choice has been creating and expanding programs every year, whereas the "instructionist" reforms Stern supports are mostly either stalled or (as in Massachusetts) backsliding.

It is also not true, as Stern and Casse assert, that school choice has failed to improve public schools. In fact, a large body of high-quality scientific research has consistently shown that public schools exposed to school choice make significant—sometimes even dramatic—improvements. The key is to examine results at the schools that are actually exposed to school choice. Not all Milwaukee students are eligible for the Milwaukee voucher program; in the neighborhoods where many students are eligible, the public schools are making impressive gains.

This is only scratching the surface of the issue. Anyone who wants to hear what Stern's critics actually said should start by reading Greene's devastating point-by-point demolition of Stern's case.

Robert C. Enlow
Indianapolis, Ind.

Daniel Casse responds: I agree with Robert Enlow that people should read the entire exchange on the future of vouchers on *City Journal*'s website. There they will find not only the arguments by Jay Greene that Enlow mentions, but also Sol Stern's 2,000 word, point-by-point rebuttal. For example, Greene cites two studies of the Milwaukee school system that suggest that since the inception of the voucher program there has been a general improvement in all schools. The problem, as Stern points out, is that those studies are out of date. The two most recent studies show that, since the implementation of the voucher program, reading scores across all Milwaukee schools are falling.

Both Enlow and McCluskey want to persuade us that voucher programs are a growing, successful trend. Yes, there are more market alternatives (which I applaud) like charter schools and merit pay. But voucher systems have always been the spearhead of the school choice movement. If these programs are defeated in a Utah referendum, if Jeb Bush cannot persuade his own Republican legislators in Florida to support them, if the Michigan Supreme Court rules them unconstitutional, if there has yet to be a single, statewide voucher initiative . . . well, isn't it time to face reality and admit there really is no successful national political plan to implement vouchers? While teacher union money may be stopping the voucher movement, that is an argument that only the losing side would make.

What made Sol Stern's article so refreshing is that it dealt with the facts on the ground. As I wrote, I think he and his "instructionist" allies need a better political strategy. So do Enlow and McCluskey. Simply reciting the school choice catechism about bureaucrats and education consumers has so far been an electoral flop.

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Gold Medal in Tyranny

In July 2001, when the International Olympics Committee (IOC) awarded the 2008 summer games to Beijing, the international community began a thought-experiment. Wouldn't holding the games in China give the world's democracies "leverage" over that country's Communist dictatorship? Wouldn't the increased media attention and "scrutiny" force Beijing to relax its security apparatus and increase civil liberties? Wouldn't the Olympics be just another elevation in China's "peaceful rise" to "responsible stakeholder," great-power status?

Seven years later, we have our answer. It is a resounding "No." Over the last couple of weeks, riots have broken out in Tibet and surrounding areas and been suppressed by brute force. The State Department's annual report on human rights details an uptick in China's already dismal practices. A prominent Chinese dissident has been put on trial in Beijing on charges of subverting state power. The hypothesis that hosting the Olympics would mellow Beijing's ruthlessness has been proved false. The experiment has failed.

Back in 2001, a bipartisan coalition of American political and business elites supported the Chinese Olympics bid. Among them was the chairman of the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympics, future Massachusetts governor and Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney, who told reporters shortly before the games were awarded to Beijing that the "Olympics are about building bridges, not building walls." The former Clinton national security adviser Samuel Berger wrote a *Washington Post* op-ed entitled "Don't Antagonize China" in which he argued that the "world looks different from China" and that it makes "no sense" for U.S. policymakers to "throw a monkey wrench" into the "boldest market-oriented economic experiment in modern times." The Bush administration was officially neutral on the Beijing bid. As then-White House spokesman Ari Fleischer put it in his press briefing on the day the Chinese got the games, the "president does not view this as a political matter."

There were many who had faith that the Chinese Communists would see the Olympics as a chance to reform. "This now is an opportunity for China to showcase itself as a modern nation," Fleischer said. The *New York Times* editorialized that "there is reason to hope that the bright spotlight the Olympics can shine on the Chinese government's behavior over the next seven years" will benefit "those in China who would like to see their country evolve into a more tolerant and democratic society."

The day after the IOC made its historic announcement, former Carter national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski—who these days advises Barack Obama—took to the *Times* op-ed page to disavow any parallel between the 1980 Moscow Olympics and the 2008 Beijing games. Brzezinski had helped plan the U.S. boycott of the 1980 Olympics to protest the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. But "the situation with China" is "not only different," he wrote in 2001. It is also "more complex." Sure, Brzezinski continued, "grievous human rights abuses are being committed by the Chinese government. . . . Tibet continues to be repressed." The "regime as a whole is still committed to one-party dictatorship." But don't believe your lying eyes. "China is nonetheless becoming a much more open society," because millions of Chinese "now have access to satellite television dishes" and "even to the Internet."

Of course, hundreds of millions of Chinese have nothing but dirt. Internet access is policed by the ever-more-sophisticated sentinels of the Great Firewall. And prosperity, while a great public good, is a meager substitute for the greater public good of natural rights such as the freedom to publicly oppose one's government, to legitimate state authority through elections, and to worship God as one sees fit.

Not to worry, Brzezinski suggested. Things will work out. The Olympics will only intensify the "pressures for change." And Beijing will respond positively. It will have no other choice.

Apparently not.

On March 10, a small group of monks in Lhasa, the capital of Chinese-occupied Tibet, went to the Jokhang Temple and began to chant "Free Tibet" and "Dalai Lama." Soon other Tibetans joined them. Police dispersed the protest, arrested the ringleaders, and prevented monks from monasteries on the city's periphery from joining in. But the yak was out of the bag, so to speak. The protests continued and over the last few weeks have spread to Gansu, Qinghai, and Sichuan provinces. There have been hunger strikes, acts of self-immolation, some attacks on the ethnic Han Chinese majority, sit-ins, marches, and candle-light vigils.

The Chinese government's response has been simple. It has used all available force, including deadly force, to crush the protests, while it heavily censors the information the world receives about them. Lhasa has been sealed off. We don't know how many people have died in the uprising—the numbers range from 16 (Beijing's official tally) to more than 80 (the estimate from the Tibetan government-in-exile in India). Thousands of the People's Armed Police have

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been mobilized. The People's Liberation Army appears to be running logistics and resupply for them. Hundreds of people have been detained. Dozens have been arrested. The security services have built checkpoints and roadblocks. They regulate the flow of people into and out of the contested areas. And as we go to press late on March 20, reports are that the Chinese authorities largely have reestablished control.

In related news, on March 11, as unrest in Tibet was intensifying, the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor released its annual country reports on human rights practices. This year, for the first time, the People's Republic of China has been left off the list of the world's worst human-rights violators. China's absence isn't due to diplomatic considerations in light of the upcoming Olympics, acting assistant secretary of state Jonathan Farrar cautioned reporters. Nor is it due, apparently, to any changes in China's human-rights practices. Quite the contrary; those practices have gotten worse. According to the report, in 2007 "controls were tightened in some areas," such as religious liberty in Tibet and the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, "freedom of speech and the media, including the Internet; and the treatment of petitioners in Beijing." There were other serious abuses, the report continues, including "extrajudicial killings, torture and coerced confessions of prisoners, and the use of forced labor." The "coercive birth limitation"—the One-Child policy—continues, too, "in some cases" resulting "in forced abortion or sterilization."

Folks in China also have a tendency to disappear. Dissidents and political prisoners are sentenced to a network of maximum-security psychiatric prisons in which they are penned with the dangerously insane and from which they have no chance of reprieve. In addition, according to the State Department report, in 2007 "the party and state exercised strict political control of courts and judges, conducted closed trials and carried out administrative detention." In China there is no presumption of innocence, no adversary system of justice, often no trial witnesses other than the defendant, no right against self-incrimination, "no protection against double jeopardy, and no rules governing the type of evidence that may be introduced." What little provision for due process the law affords, the authorities tend to ignore.

The phrase "human rights in China" is little more than a joke. And any Chinese who dare say as much in public face harsh penalties. One of them, the AIDS and environmental activist Hu Jia, stood trial last week on charges of subverting state power. The road that led Hu to the Beijing Number One Intermediate People's Court is long. Between August 2006 and March 2007, he spent 214 days under house arrest. On May 18, 2007, as Hu and his wife, fellow dissident Zeng Jinyan, were about to leave for an overseas speaking engagement, Hu's house arrest was reinstated. From home, Hu continued to sign his name to essays drawing attention to the depravities of the Chinese government. During this time his daughter was born. On December 27, 2007, police removed him from his home, where his wife and daughter were forced to remain. The police confiscated every piece of electronic communications technology Hu and Zeng possessed. Their telephone line was disconnected. Applications from Hu's lawyer to meet with his client were denied until February 4, 2008, at which time the police supervised the meeting. On the evening of March 6, Teng Biao, one of Hu's lawyers, was forced into a vehicle and taken to an undisclosed location, where he was told that it was not in his interest to talk to foreign journalists about Hu Jia and human rights violations in China. Three days before Hu's trial began, authorities informed his wife that she would not be allowed to attend. In the end only Hu's mother was allowed into the courtroom. The trial was brief. A verdict is expected this week. Hu faces up to five years in prison.

These are not isolated incidents. The Dui Hua Foundation, a San Francisco-based nonprofit, has found that in 2007 Chinese arrests for "endangering state security" were at their highest level since 1999. This follows a doubling of such arrests between 2005 and 2006. Nor is the Tibetan uprising isolated. The number of officially reported "public order disturbances" has been on the rise for several years. China is ratcheting up its defense spending. Its policy of "noninterference" supports dictators in places like Sudan, North Korea, Burma, Iran, Venezuela, and Russia. Far from imposing democratic pressure on Beijing, the Olympic games seem to have done the exact opposite: They have emboldened the Chinese dictatorship in its constant quest to obliterate any chance the country has for a real politics.

There clearly wasn't a good reason, then, for China's absence from the State Department's list of the worst human rights violators. Surely that absence reflects the same naive view articulated seven years ago during the debate over the awarding of the Olympics; the same facile argument American elites—Democrats and Republicans, academics and bureaucrats, lobbyists and corporate titans—have peddled for two decades: that our economic engagement with China would lead inevitably to political liberalization. This does not seem to be happening, however. Which raises some serious questions about our China policy. Isn't it time we had a grown-up discussion about China's persistent authoritarianism? This summer seems like a pretty good occasion to start it.

—Matthew Continetti, for the Editors

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Luckiest Man in the Race

For McCain, the best may be yet to come.

BY FRED BARNES

GARY LOCKE

John McCain is one lucky fellow. Of course you can make your own luck, as the saying goes. That's what McCain did with great courage to survive five-and-a-half years at the Hanoi Hilton. And he made his own luck again by advocating a surge of troops in Iraq that later proved to be successful.

In winning the Republican presidential nomination, however, McCain has mostly been just plain lucky, no thanks to his own fortitude or foresight. Conservatives inadvertently aided him by failing to line up behind a single rival. Mike Huckabee ruined Mitt Romney's strategy by beating him in Iowa. And Rudy Giuliani helped by pulling out of New Hampshire and fading in Florida, allowing McCain to sneak ahead and win primaries in both states.

Now Democrats are boosting McCain's chances of winning the presidency by prolonging the battle for the Democratic presidential nomination. "They are eating their own," says Dick Morris, the onetime adviser to the Clintons. The result, for the moment anyway, is that McCain is inching ahead in polls matching him against Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton.

So long as Clinton stays in the race, the bitter divide among Democrats will widen—to McCain's advantage. And since Clinton still has a chance of winning, she's bound to continue her campaign at least through the Pennsylvania primary on April 22 and the Indiana and North Carolina primaries on May 6—and probably until the verdict of Democratic super-delegates becomes clear sometime this summer.

No matter who ultimately wins the nomination, the prospects for electing a Democratic president this fall will have declined. And through no machinations of his own, McCain's chances of winning will have improved. There's a name for that happenstance: luck.

For McCain, the best may be yet to come. If Clinton manages a come-from-behind victory over Obama, that could produce the dream election for McCain, one in which the Democratic party fails to unify behind its presidential candidate. Given the eagerness of Democrats to capture the White House after eight Bush years, that may seem farfetched. It's not. It's a real possibility.

What if Obama prevails? He'll have been weakened by having had the "kitchen sink" thrown at him by the Clinton forces. With no significant ideological differences between Clinton and Obama, they've focused on his personal shortcomings: inexperience, habit of saying one thing while believing the opposite, unimpressive Senate record, lack of appeal to white working class and Hispanic voters.

The Clinton attacks have begun to transform the popular image of Obama from that of an inspirational leader above the grubby fray of party politics to that of a normal politician. This should largely spare McCain from criticizing Obama on personal grounds and free him to concentrate on Obama's left-wing political views.

Three scenarios are possible in the Democratic race. The most likely—and the one that helps McCain the least—is that the primaries end with Obama leading in both delegates and popular votes, prompting the super-delegates to tilt his way. Thus he wins the nomination, and the party unites behind him.

The second scenario is Clinton's favorite. Her best chance of defeating

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Obama is to surpass him in the popular vote, then declare herself the true choice of Democratic voters despite trailing in delegates. She has practically no prospect of overtaking him in delegates in the closing primaries. He currently leads by roughly 130 delegates.

For Clinton, winning the popular vote won't be easy. Obama picked up 100,000 more votes than Clinton in the most recent contest, the Mississippi primary, and his lead is now 700,000. But there are enough big primaries left that it's achievable, all the more so if Michigan and Florida schedule do-over primaries.

Obama's response is preordained: The primary campaign is about winning delegates, and I won the most. Those are the rules. Should the superdelegates side with Clinton, the entire Obama movement—and especially blacks—would feel cheated. Indeed, they would have been cheated. The likelihood of a party split would be significant.

Scenario number three is similar to the first in that Obama wins the most delegates and votes. But rather than concede, Clinton contends that, since she's won most of the final 10 or 12 primaries (assuming this is the case), she's the real favorite of Democratic voters. Besides, she'll say, Obama can't win the big states and who knows what will emerge once he's been fully frisked by the media, and (assuming no do-overs) that she won in Michigan and Florida. In other words, all the bad things you've heard before from Clinton central. And then there's the Reverend Wright business.

Calling this a desperate and party-shattering tactic by the Clinton forces would be putting it mildly. Are they really capable of it? Maybe not. But if they pulled it off, and Clinton swiped the nomination from Obama, the consequence is not hard to figure out. It's President McCain.

McCain shouldn't count on that big a gift from Democrats. Luck can only take you so far. There's a saying in baseball that it's better to be lucky than good. Presidential campaigns operate a bit differently. To win, a candidate has to be lucky and good. ♦

Confidence Game

A McCain agenda for financial recovery.

BY DAVID M. SMICK

The most dangerous time politically for John McCain is between now and Labor Day, when the GOP convention begins. Democrats, including 527-funded outside groups, will attempt to marginalize him on the domestic front. With the collapse in consumer confidence and the ongoing credit crisis, they will attack the Arizona senator (who admits he "knows nothing" about economics) as, economically speaking, a third term for George W. Bush. The charge will gather credibility as the U.S. economy continues to weaken.

During the Republican primaries, McCain scored points by talking about fiscal responsibility and with attacks on earmarked pork barrel spending. Yet as a general election approaches with the credit system at risk, speeches centering on budgetary bean counting sound strangely irrelevant. When the house is on fire, it isn't the time to do an inventory of the furniture in the front parlor. McCain needs to campaign on a set of bold economic policies.

Arriving at a set of policy solutions, however, won't be easy because the credit crisis has been resistant to conventional policy measures. In recent weeks, the senator has praised the Federal Reserve for its cuts in short-term interest rates, and he supported the bipartisan emergency stimulus package passed in early 2008. Yet these are little more than painkillers. They may lessen the severity of the subprime-related symptoms of the contraction of the credit markets, but they are inadequate in dealing with a problem in the financial system's very architecture. What is at issue for the next president is a problem that was brewing long before the housing bubble burst. At issue is a fundamental and increasing distrust of the asset-backed securities market, one of the main arteries of the global credit system.

For the past decade, the large global financial institutions have flooded the world with asset-backed securities where the "asset" is often a collection of securitized mortgages. Here's how the system works. Senior financial executives lump the mortgages into a pile, divide them into multiple interest-income streams, and for a fee sell them as mortgage-backed securities. The only measure of risk and value of these new securities comes from the credit rating agencies, which measure risk based on sophisticated mathematical models. In this new system, the lender therefore no longer has any connection to the lendee—or the need to worry about whether he or she will pay back a loan. For the bankers and investment bankers, the goal is no longer risk *management* but risk *dispersion*. A system of diminished transparency depends on the broader market's confidence that the mortgage-backed securities reflect a viable value. Today there is sudden, widespread distrust of these complicated financial paper assets.

Under normal conditions, the financial system would have relatively easily absorbed a subprime mortgage problem amounting to a mere $200 billion in securitized exposure in a global market worth hundreds of tril-

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lions. What the markets couldn't tolerate was the discovery of the legal but dubious system that banks and investment banks set up in the past decade to obscure risk—especially mortgage risk. It is the independent, off-the-balance-sheet vehicles (called conduits or structured investment vehicles) set up by the large financial institutions which triggered the credit crisis.

Why would a bank set up a separate vehicle where the parent bank is not even listed on the balance sheet as a primary beneficiary? One word: greed. The large financial institutions created their own private market—a kind of automatic, legal dumping ground of risk with the added bonus of enormous profits.

The large institutions brazenly encouraged their independent vehicles to buy the parent's mortgage-backed securities, some containing significant amounts of subprime exposure. Using these securities as collateral, the independent vehicles went to the global credit markets and borrowed by issuing commercial paper (unsecured short-term debt that is one of the backbones of the cash-like money market funds). When the housing bubble burst, the sudden strain in the commercial paper market put the independent vehicles in real jeopardy.

The parent banks hadn't counted on the fact that, in a global market, traders don't distinguish between the off-the-balance-sheet vehicles and their big parent banks. With the independent vehicles in trouble, the parent banks were seen as in trouble. Bank stocks collapsed, global credit seized up, and even ultra-safe money market funds were at risk. Investors, fearful of holding paper assets of dubious value, poured into short-term government bond markets and commodities, especially oil and gold, for the comfort of assets whose value can be physically measured.

The Federal Reserve confronted the crisis by trying to stabilize the broader market with preemptive interest rate cuts and other targeted means of channeling liquidity to the banks. Congress passed a stimulus package. But cutting interest rates can't make investors trust debt instruments where there is no connection to the lendee and where mortgage debt exposure is hidden in off-the-balance-sheet vehicles. Fiscal stimuli can't create buyers when confidence in the system of securitizing assets has disappeared. It took a decade for global markets to trust these new financial instruments. Even with reforms, the return of trust will take time. Recovery will be slow.

Last week the Federal Reserve stunned the world by placing the investment bank Bear Stearns and potentially other so-called "nonbank" institutions under the government safety net (allowing them access to the Fed's Discount Window, which was established during the Great Depression to allow banks access to emergency loans regardless of the quality of their collateral). With the Fed appearing to guarantee the entire financial system, not just the banks, we are entering a brave new world. Given the severity of the immediate crisis, it may be that the Fed had no other choice. But whether a blanket guarantee in the long run expands or restricts lending remains to be seen. Today the firms Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac enjoy an implicit government guarantee, yet investors are fleeing in droves. It is also unclear in a government guaranteed financial system what regulatory force can protect the public interest in the distribution of liquidity and the measuring of risk.

This is a treacherous situation, and it gives John McCain the opportunity to lead on the economic front. In today's globalized financial system, capital sweeps across national borders—and today that capital is questioning America's economic future. This is one reason the dollar is collapsing. Bankers have behaved badly. Given his track record, however, the senator will be tempted to demonize the financial sector and support new overregulation (after Enron, he supported the Sarbanes-Oxley legislation which has helped make London the world's financial center at the expense of New York).

McCain needs to call for a set of surgically precise reforms that avoid threatening the larger financial system as a wealth-creating force. The key is to make sure the United States remains an attractive destination for investment.

Instead, McCain needs to call for a set of surgically precise reforms that avoid threatening the larger financial system as a wealth-creating force. The key is to make sure the United States remains an attractive destination for investment. A McCain policy must lead to greater financial transparency and a better understanding of the nature of market risk and dangerous financial leverage. It must call for the elimination of off-the-balance-sheet financial schemes as well as for a platform for standardizing the pricing of securitized assets.

Recognizing the international nature of America's economic agenda, McCain should call for a global summit to address issues of savings and trade imbalances along with currency relationships—with China, India, and the oil producers as central entities in the multilateral discussions. Most of all, to rebuild confidence in the U.S. economy, McCain needs to strike hard against today's rising protectionist and class warfare policies. During the subprime crisis, the charged political rhetoric calling for reopening of trade agreements and the restriction of capital flows has added psychological kerosene to an already raging fire of global distrust in America. Some of the recent demagoguery threatens the very heart of America's climate of entrepreneurial risk-taking. It borders on insanity.

Today the world economy is at a pivotal point. John McCain, positioning himself as an activist, caring, and imaginative leader on the domestic front, desperately needs to step forward. ♦

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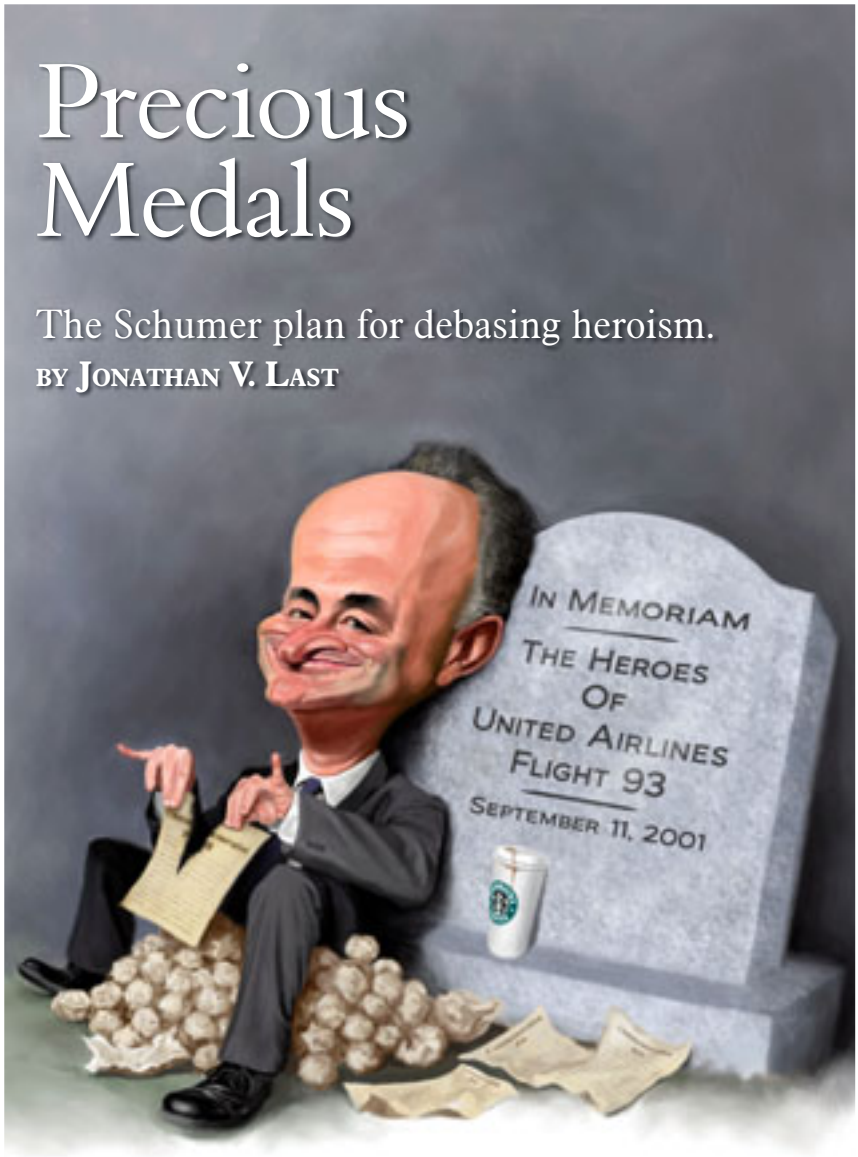
Precious Medals

The Schumer plan for debasing heroism.

BY JONATHAN V. LAST



PAUL MOYSE

The federal government has had difficulty honoring the heroes of Flight 93. Fundraising for the national memorial in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, where Flight 93 crashed on 9/11, lags, and the project has yet to break ground. And even simpler honors have so far eluded Congress.

The Gold Medal is the highest honor Congress can grant a civilian. It requires two-thirds cosponsorship in both the House and Senate and is a powerful sign of gratitude for service to the nation. The first medal was forged in 1776 and awarded to George Washington. Only six more were awarded before 1800, all to Revolutionary heroes. Until the Civil War, the Gold Medal was given mostly to war heroes such as Andrew Jackson and Zachary Taylor, but afterwards, notables like George Peabody and the Wright brothers began to receive it.

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Schumer began pushing his own bill, the Fallen Heroes of 9/11 Act. It seeks to issue posthumous 'national' medals—although not Gold Medals—to everyone who died on September 11.

By 1950, the medal was also going to figures in the arts and entertainment—Irving Berlin, Robert Frost, and Bob Hope. Walt Disney got one in 1968, though so did Winston Churchill the following year. Even groups got in on the act—the American Red Cross, the 1980 U.S. Summer Olympic Team, the Tuskegee Airmen.

An effort to award the Gold Medal posthumously to the passengers and crew of Flight 93 began a few days after the attacks. On September 20, 2001, three bills were introduced in the House proposing that Congress give the Gold Medal to various people aboard the fated plane.

Rep. Marge Roukema's bill singled out just one passenger, Jeremy Glick, who hailed from her New Jersey district. Rep. Cliff Stearns's bill sought to honor everyone on the doomed flight. Finally, Rep. Tom Tancredo's bill proposed awarding the Gold Medal to:

> Jeremy Glick, Todd Beamer, Thomas Burnett, Jr., and Mark Bingham; and other passengers or crew members on board United Airlines Flight 93 who are identified by the Attorney General as having aided in the effort to resist the hijackers on board the plane.

This last proposal ultimately garnered the most support, attracting 235 cosponsors—just 55 short of the required two-thirds. The wording of the bill nicely captured the spirit of Flight 93 and seemed most in line with the original conception of the Gold Medal, stating: "The leaders of the resistance aboard United Airlines Flight 93 demonstrated exceptional bravery, valor, and patriotism, and are worthy of the appreciation of the people of the United States."

Tancredo's bill expired with the 107th Congress. Since then, others have championed the cause in various guises, notably Rep. Peter King. Some bills were introduced in the Senate, where they were kicked over

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to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, which did nothing. Sitting on this committee was Senator Charles Schumer.

In March 2003, Schumer began pushing his own bill, the Fallen Heroes of 9/11 Act. It seeks to issue posthumous "national" medals—although not Gold Medals—to everyone who died on September 11. His logic, explained in the bill, is that "in the eyes of the terrorists, we are all the enemy, and the term 'innocent civilian' has no meaning."

In the face of Schumer's leveling wind, Rep. Bill Shuster, whose district includes Shanksville, attempted in April 2006 to rally the House to the idea of the Gold Medal for Flight 93. He reintroduced his bill last March. It has only 105 cosponsors and has gone nowhere.

Meanwhile, Schumer is once again poised to trot out his Fallen Heroes of 9/11 Act. The Families of Flight 93 are trying to persuade Schumer that, however noble or tragic the destinies of those killed in New York and Washington on September 11, the actions of those on Flight 93 were different, and they deserve to be recognized as such.

For his part, Shuster has yet to throw in the towel. As his press secretary, Jeff Urbanchuk, explains, "We look at [Flight 93] as a situation that is unique. . . . We feel that there's a certain factor that separates Congressional Gold Medal recipients from other awards which are allowed by Congress."

"Schumer's legislation has a worthy end," Urbanchuk says, "which is that everyone who was impacted by the September 11 attacks should receive a commendation in remembrance of the sacrifice. We're not opposed to that legislation, but we see that as separate."

Shuster, then, will carry on the fight, trying to convince Congress to give Flight 93 the same recognition it lavished most recently on Dr. Michael DeBakey, a celebrated cardiologist. ♦

Recognition Without Power

A report from independent Kosovo.

BY STEPHEN SCHWARTZ

Dumnica, Kosovo

A month has passed since Kosovo declared its independence on February 17. Cynics had predicted the meltdown of Kosovar Albanian society, accompanied by atrocities against Serbs and other minorities, but this has not taken place. Ordinary Kosovar Albanians, however—farmers and urban workers and tradesmen—have gotten over their immediate exultation and returned to a hard-headed wariness about Europe and its promises to help defend, democratize, and develop the new republic.

The meltdown, or something close to it, has come instead in Serbia proper, where on March 13 President Boris Tadic dissolved parliament and called for new elections on May 11. Serbian prime minister Vojislav Kostunica, the nationalist sold to the West in 2000 as a clean alternative to the late Slobodan Milosevic, precipitated the collapse of the Serbian administration. Put simply, the Tadic faction wants to continue to press for Serbia's entry into the European Union, even if it means giving up its historic claim to Kosovo.

By contrast, Kostunica and his supporters are ready to turn their backs on Europe in rage over Kosovar independence, and put all their hopes on support from Russia. In the coming Serbian elections, the "liberal" Kostunica may form a bloc with the Serbian Radical party, the most violent nationalist entity west of the Russian fever swamp.

Kosovo has been granted a status best described as "recognition without sovereignty." The list of countries establishing relations with the new nation (the roster can be found at *kosovothanksyou.com*) grows longer almost daily. But notwithstanding wild claims by Serbia and its supporters that Kosovo would become an Islamic republic, the Arab states and Iran are notably absent from the inventory. The only Muslim countries that had recognized Kosovo by March 20 were Afghanistan, Senegal, and Malaysia. Informed opinion in Arab circles holds that recognizing Kosovo would be viewed by Islamists as support for American policies rather than solidarity with a Muslim-majority country. Bangladesh, the Ivory Coast, Kuwait, Mauritania, Morocco, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Tunisia have indicated that they will probably recognize the government in Pristina, but they seem to be in no hurry.

Still, diplomatic recognition of Kosovo, while viscerally satisfying for Kosovar Albanians and their friends, means little without the normal institutions of a free republic: clearly defined borders, a new constitution, an army, police, and an independent judiciary. Such powers are to remain in the hands of Europe for nine months or longer, under the Ahtisaari Plan, yet another of those tatty "road maps" promised to people at risk around the world.

NATO and especially the United States have given fairly clear assurances that a Serbian attack on Kosovo, or attempt to annex the northern corner of the country, will be met with military force, and U.S. Marines are among the contingents from the Kosovo Force (KFOR) that have

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been deployed to the divided city of Mitrovica, where Serbians continue to patrol, as they have since 1999, at the northern end of the bridge over the river Ibar, which runs through the town.

On March 14, having already seized control of railroad and customs facilities north of Mitrovica, a mob of Serbs occupied the U.N. court there, tearing down the blue banner of the international organization and replacing it with an extremist banner. U.N. police declined to confront the mob; a Ukrainian member of the U.N. police even placed a Serbian flag on a U.N. vehicle, for which the officer was suspended. After more dithering, international police took the building back from the crowd, but on March 17 the Serbs, allegedly coordinated from Belgrade, struck again, heaving grenades and gasoline bombs and shooting at the "internationals," killing a Ukrainian officer and wounding many. The U.N. police withdrew and were replaced by KFOR troops. But Serb soldiers and irregulars continuously poke and prod at Kosovo's northern frontiers.

Whether Belgrade will actually throw itself into a full-scale provocation against Kosovo statehood is debatable. Kosovar Albanians are more concerned that the European Union will simply divide the country and hand the north over to Serbia. Strikingly, Kosovars have a clear-sighted view of global politics: Vladimir Putin's Russia is the big threat, and Serbia is a pawn in Russia's bid to turn back the expansion of NATO and assert Russian influence over the whole of Europe.

But many Kosovars also understand that their country stands between two fires—revived Slavic imperialism and the threat of Islamist aggression. Kosovars themselves are rarely demonstrative about their Muslim faith—I saw only six young women in head coverings during a week in the country (though the hijab is more common among rural grandmothers), and Islamic literature is difficult to find. But the situation is dire in neighboring Macedonia.

REUTERS / STOYAN NENOV

Kosovo prime minister Hashim Thaci and schoolchildren hold the new Kosovo flag.

There, the regime has given free rein to Arab governments and foundations to build new mosques that spread jihadist doctrines. Wahhabi aggression against the long-established Sufi presence in the western Macedonian city of Tetovo has reached a real crisis point. Only four months ago, two buildings at the Harabati Sufi center in Tetovo were occupied by Saudi-supported Wahhabis with their scruffy beards and automatic weapons. Now the Wahhabis, mobilizing what appear to be street vagabonds recruited and paid to fill up the Harabatis' spacious Ottoman complex, have taken over most of it. They scream insults and threats at the Sufis and fire their weapons into the air at night.

The Macedonian government appears eager to sow discord in the large Albanian community within its borders. Its benevolent policy toward Wahhabism parallels a similar one in south Serbia. Physical clashes between Wahhabi agitators and indigenous Muslims have become a common feature of life everywhere except in Kosovo. In the south Serbian town of Tutin, for instance, the beginning of March saw fighting between the moderate, traditional Muslims led by local mufti Muamer Zukorlic, and a Wahhabi group calling itself "the Islamic Community of Serbia" and run by an unknown named Adem Zilkic, openly aligned with Kostunica's Serb nationalists. During a riot on March 7, an Albanian supporter of the moderates, Enver Shkreli, was shot in both legs, apparently by Serbian police supporting the radicals.

Back in Kosovo, a trip around the republic discloses further evidence that recognition does not mean sovereignty. Kosovars have yet to be issued passports, and the post offices have no stamps representing the new state—travel documents and the mail are still under the authority of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). More grating to many Kosovar Albanians has been the imposition of a denationalized Kosovo flag, blue with a gold map of the country and six white stars, in place of the traditional Albanian red and black double-eagle standard.

At the level of daily life, recognition without sovereignty could also be called recognition without power—a pun of sorts, since after eight years of foreign administration Kosovo still sees its electrical system crash into darkness on a nightly and often daily basis. Austria is only now talking about donations to upgrade Kosovo's schools. So what have the internationals accomplished since

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1999, aside from accumulating exorbitant salaries, taking over the best neighborhoods, denying the Kosovars economic and political reform, and expressing a general contempt for the local inhabitants? Well, they have created a new class of prosperous local employees, who have learned English (because the internationals seldom study the Albanian language) and built their own upscale homes and districts. But the Albanian members of the U.N.-EU bureaucracy, while often the most robust defenders of Kosovo's "paper independence," would doubtless suffer loss of income and status if the internationals left.

The Kosovar Albanian political leadership is widely seen as corrupt, and the existence of an underground economy in Kosovo is undeniable, although it has little or nothing to do with lurid tales about drug dealing put forward by Serbian advocates. Given that the U.N. and EU have not permitted the establishment of secure local economic institutions, the growth of an uncontrolled economy was inevitable. Kosovars have a large diaspora sending money home from the United States, Germany, and Switzerland, and without financial stability inside the new republic the funds have to go somewhere. But there is a greater corruption in the rise of politicians and functionaries who owe their prosperity to their accommodation to and employment by the internationals.

On the night of March 12, I traveled with Albin Kurti, the popular leader of Kosovo's Self-Determination movement, and a group of his colleagues to Dumnica, a tiny village on the northeastern frontier with Serbia. Dumnica is close to Merdare, where a Kosovo Republic border sign was installed early in March. Serbian army reservists threatened to cross the frontier to tear down the marker, but were prevented from doing so by Serbian authorities, who appeared suddenly cautious after the worldwide public relations disaster represented by the mob attacks on the American and other foreign embassies in Belgrade late in February.

The area that includes Merdare and Dumnica is called Llap and has long been a center of Albanian patriotism. When Serbia conquered Kosovo in 1912, Slav armies poured into the territory through Llap, and thousands of Albanians were slaughtered, their villages burned and possessions looted. Llap was also a major theater of fighting in the 1998-99 war. Villagers there are hard workers, good savers, and boast such amenities as camera cellphones and portable computers.

So what have the internationals accomplished since 1999, aside from accumulating exorbitant salaries, taking over the best neighborhoods, denying the Kosovars economic and political reform, and expressing a general contempt for the local inhabitants?

Kurti had come to Dumnica to explain his criticism of the Kosovo political class and its acceptance of paper independence. The village is not shown on maps, and with the border unmarked, we joked about what might happen if we drove too far up the road and found ourselves in Serbian hands. The stars were brilliant in the deep, rural night. Finally, thanks to the ubiquity of cellphones, we were taken to a large house where the elders of the village were crowded into the special room reserved for guests. Outside, guards were posted while Kurti spoke.

What unfolded was a scene of traditional village democracy. Kurti presented his case for full independence, a real ministry of defense and an army and police, firm borders, a new constitution written by the Kosovars themselves rather than by foreign experts, and all the other institutions needed to prove that independence is real. He was answered, always respectfully but nonetheless critically, by some who said that at least Kosovo now has its own standing in the world, and that the Albanians must be patient in waiting for complete freedom.

One of the most moderate speakers was an imam who had come to the meeting from Kacanik, at the other end of Kosovo. Patriotic verses were recited and the names of past heroes invoked. For a foreign observer, nothing was more fascinating than the faces of the villagers—strong, intelligent, intent as they listened to Kurti, a man who can discuss Heidegger and postmodernism with facility, but who addressed this gathering simply and directly. Later, another Kosovar who disagrees with Kurti admitted that he is an exceptional speaker, calling him "the human laser, whose words go straight to people's hearts."

To my surprise, little was said in Dumnica about Serbia. To emphasize: The villagers, with their long collective memory, see Russia as the main enemy, standing behind and using Serbia. Finally, all Kosovars are grateful to America, but many are worried because American diplomatic representatives in Pristina too often call on the Albanians to stay silent, contradicting the strong stands of George W. Bush and Condoleezza Rice, whom the Kosovars admire.

Nevertheless, even on the Serbian border, the Kosovars betray no fear. Indeed, it occurred to me, watching the faces and listening to the sharp words of Albin Kurti, that there are two borders in Dumnica. One divides Serbia from Kosovo. The other separates the old world of massacres, totalitarianism, Russian imperialism, and what Secretary Rice has criticized as the Serbian fixation with the past, from the new world of security, investment, democracy, and friendship with America. Nearly all the Albanians in Dumnica are Muslims, yet they act as if the war with radical Islam will be no more than

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an episode, while the danger of confrontation with Putin's neo-czarist expansionism has returned to bedevil the world.

And the news then on the front pages prompted this further reflection: Even as Kurti was speaking, on the other side of the world China—Russia's partner in U.N. obstruction of Kosovo's full liberation—had sent troops to the Tibetan capital, Lhasa, where dozens of demonstrators were shot dead. India, anxious to keep the torturers of Tiananmen Square happy, had arrested and beaten Tibetan demonstrators, and Nepal had surrendered to a Chinese demand to close its border and prevent protestors from heading to Mount Everest for a pro-Tibetan action. But the Tibetans in Lhasa, led by Buddhist monks even tougher than the martyrs of freedom in Burma not long ago, would come back to defy Communist bullets and tear gas. Over the weekend of March 16 and in the week that followed, Lhasa and other places would still be defying Chinese "order," and stone-throwing Tibetans would repeatedly be answered with rifle fire.

Kosovo and Tibet, on the front lines between liberty and tyranny, make the case for a new international League of Democracies, from which Russia and China would perforce be excluded. It is a concept the country folk in Dumnica would understand. ♦

Cheney in Baghdad

What a difference two years make.

BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

Baghdad

As Vice President Dick Cheney chatted with Iraqi prime minister Nouri al-Maliki before their meeting last week, David Addington sat unobtrusively in a gold-trimmed chair near the back of the room. Unobtrusiveness isn't easy for him to do. At about 6′4,″ the vice president's chief of staff cuts an imposing figure, but in public Addington somehow manages to keep a low profile. The seats were arranged in a horseshoe, with the two principals at the bottom and their respective staffs facing each other.

We were in a grand room in the building that houses Maliki's office—an opulent structure that Saddam built in the 1990s as a home away from home for the Arab leaders whose support he sought to end the U.N. sanctions against his country. Between Addington and his boss sat several lower-ranking Cheney staffers, and, by rank, he should have chosen a seat much closer to his boss. But Addington believes, as Cheney did when he served in the Ford White House, that a staff man should be anonymous. So he shuns the spotlight and avoids journalists unless, as in this case, he cannot help it.

The small press pool traveling with Cheney had been told we would be let into the room for a brief photo op—the smile-and-make-small-talk moment before an important bilateral meeting. The Iraqi press corps was being held at the door while we walked in. Cheney, a natural low-talker, was still speaking, and his voice trailed off. "The president sends his personal . . ."

No one could make out what he said—a problem for the wire reporters who use such statements to give currency to their stories. (Later we played fill-in-the-blank. His personal . . . greetings? His personal . . . trainer? His personal . . . hygiene?)

A short time later there was a noise at the back of the room. The guard blocking the door to keep the Iraqis from entering had moved aside and the crush was on. Some 15 cameramen, with cameras held high above their heads, were trying to squeeze through the narrow doorway at precisely the same time, with the Iraqi reporters pushing from behind. This mass of humanity got stuck momentarily, then burst through the opening as if propelled from a slingshot. They were still struggling for position, and making a quiet commotion, as they neared the delegation.

Two of the Iraqi cameramen had a particularly intense shoving match underway, and when the larger one finally tired of the smaller one knocking into his arm, he gave the little guy a forceful shove that knocked him off-balance and sent him into the loving arms of David Addington. The larger cameraman then lost his balance, and, for just a moment, he and his colleague were both sitting in the lap of Cheney's much-feared chief of staff. Addington looked something like an underfed offseason shopping-mall Santa. He shook his head, chuckled, and gave a shrug of his large shoulders.

Cheney must have had a similar feeling often in his two days of meetings with Iraqi leaders, with political problems landing unexpectedly in his lap. He arrived in Baghdad planning to spend most of his time laying the groundwork for the next phase of the long-term strategic relationship between the United States and Iraq. But the Iraqis have yet to meet several of the benchmarks set by Congress last fall. Their apparent lack of urgency prompted General David

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Petraeus, the top military commander in Iraq, to offer rare public criticism of Iraqi leaders last week. In an interview with the *Washington Post*, Petraeus said that "no one" in the U.S. and Iraqi governments "feels that there has been sufficient progress by any means in the area of national reconciliation."

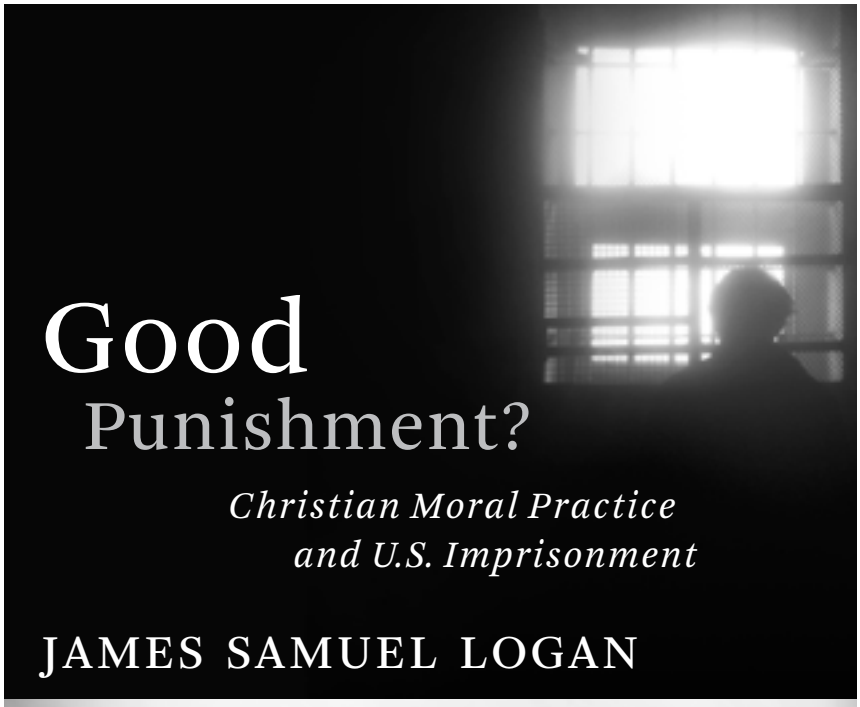
So while Cheney spent some of his time on big-picture strategic issues, the slow churn of Iraqi political progress forced him to devote a considerable amount of his visit to seeking to broker compromises among Iraq's sometimes intransigent leaders on issues ranging from a new oil law to the structure of provincial governments.

Cheney reviewed his work in an interview with Martha Raddatz of ABC News. "On the political front, I think we have bought the time for the Iraqis to come together, in terms of dealing with some of these issues. They've made some progress, not as much as we would like." He acknowledged talking to "virtually all" of the Iraqi leaders he met with about the need for a new hydrocarbons law that ensured the various segments of Iraqi society would benefit from the sale of Iraqi oil. "The provincial powers legislation that has passed at one point was vetoed by Vice President Adel Mehdi," Cheney continued. "I talked with him about that, and a number of others. They expect they'll have that resolved shortly."

They did. Adel Mehdi reversed his veto two days after talking about it with Cheney. The vice president's advisers downplayed suggestions that the Iraqi decision came as a direct result of pressure. Still, an aide to Cheney had said before the trip that the vice president would press the Iraqis to reconcile their differences on provincial powers and would urge them to hold provincial elections this fall or in early 2008 at the latest.

There were, of course, symbolic aspects to Cheney's trip, too. When the vice president visited Baghdad in May of last year, Iraq was averaging nearly 1,500 attacks a week and stories describing the "chaos" dominated the news. Back in Washington, Democrats on Capitol Hill were threatening to defund the war effort and beginning a summer-long push to begin troop withdrawals.

Attacks are down nearly 70 percent and more Iraqis have confidence in the U.S. military and their own leaders. Cheney's visit underscored the progress. He ventured out of Baghdad's green zone into the less militarized parts of the city and stayed overnight in Balad at Logistical Support Area Anaconda. When Cheney first visited Iraq in December 2005, Iraqi leaders were not told he was coming for fear of security leaks. This time, everyone he met with was notified in advance that the vice president was coming. ♦



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The Supreme Penalty

Arguing about the death penalty yet again.

BY ERIN SHELEY

This Supreme Court term marks a crossroads for death penalty jurisprudence. For the first time since 1890, the Court is considering the constitutionality of a particular means of execution—the lethal injection cocktail currently used by most states. And it is expected to rule, in a second case, on the constitutionality of capital punishment for a crime other than murder—the rape of a child. Both cases require the Court to construe one of the most nebulous clauses of the Constitution, the Eighth Amendment's ban on "cruel and unusual punishments," as well as the controversial 2005 precedent, *Roper* v. *Simmons*.

In that case, the Court considered an appeal from Christopher Simmons, sentenced to death by a Missouri jury for abducting 46-year-old Shirley Crook from her home, wrapping her head in duct tape, hog-tying her with electrical wire, and throwing her off of a bridge to drown. The Supreme Court held that 17-year-old Simmons's sentence violated the Eighth Amendment. Writing for the majority, Justice Anthony Kennedy cited "the overwhelming weight of international opinion against the juvenile death penalty" and concluded that "the express affirmation of certain fundamental rights by other nations and peoples simply underscores the centrality of those same rights within our own heritage of freedom."

Two aspects of the ruling in *Roper* v. *Simmons* sparked contention: its dubious conclusion that Simmons—who had bragged to his friends that he could "get away with it" because he was a minor—had "a greater claim than adults to be forgiven for failing to escape negative influences," and the Court's use of foreign law to help tease this conclusion from the language of the U.S. Constitution.

The composition of the Court has significantly changed since *Roper*—in particular with the retirement of Sandra Day O'Connor (who has subsequently stressed the importance of relying on international and foreign courts in examining domestic issues to "create that all-important good impression" abroad). Yet all five justices forming the *Roper* majority remain on the Court, and this term's death penalty cases—*Baze* v. *Rees*, argued in January, and *Kennedy* v. *Louisiana*, due to be heard in April—could yield a deeper entrenchment of foreign mores as constitutional arbiters of punishment under our laws. Either way, the Court could dramatically redefine the Eighth Amendment limitations on both the scope and nature of the death penalty.

> The Court dubiously concluded that Simmons—who had bragged to his friends that he could 'get away with it' because he was a minor—had 'a greater claim than adults to be forgiven for failing to escape negative influences.'

Over the years, the vagueness of the words "cruel" and "unusual" has spawned a uniquely amorphous line of precedent. In 1958 the Supreme Court held that the Eighth Amendment must draw its meaning "from the evolving standards of decency that mark the progress of a maturing society," thus charging judges with interpreting the world around them to find the meaning of the constitutional text. In 1976 the Court added that use of the death penalty must contribute to the "acceptable goals of punishment"—which it later defined as retribution against a criminal and deterrence of future crimes—and must not be "grossly out of proportion to the severity of the crime." The second criterion has left the law somewhat unsettled as to whether a crime other than murder can ever be punished by death.

To this framework, *Roper* added that courts must consider "objective criteria," such as the number of states allowing and using capital punishment under certain circumstances, before considering whether death is a disproportionate penalty in a particular case. In finding such disproportionality the Court deemed relevant the laws of other nations prohibiting the death penalty for offenders under 18 and international agreements such as the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child.

It did not, however, address precisely when international law should be taken into account, prompting Justice Antonin Scalia to note in his dissent that, to match the terms of the U.N. Convention, the United States would also have to abolish life imprisonment without the possibility of parole for minors (a punishment which the majority endorsed as an alternative to death in such cases). Now, *Baze* and *Kennedy* present two distinct Eighth Amendment problems for the Court to resolve within the structure created by *Roper*.

In *Baze*, two Kentucky death row inmates—one convicted of murdering two police officers, the other of wounding a two-year-old boy and

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shooting his parents to death in a parking lot—challenge the three-chemical formula used by 35 states to perform lethal injection. While the defendants do not challenge the practice of lethal injection itself, they argue that the particular cocktail in use is "highly vulnerable to multiple errors, any one of which will result in the infliction of agonizing pain." They argue that any death penalty procedure creating "unnecessary risk" of suffering should be deemed cruel and unusual, and urge that "an execution procedure creates unnecessary risk where, taken as a whole, it presents a significant risk of causing severe pain that could be avoided through the use of a reasonably available alternative or safeguard."

Should this claim be accepted by the Court, the ramifications for states' administration of capital punishment would be dramatic. The *Baze* defendants do not assert that the risk of pain need be great, only that it be unnecessary because an alternative means of execution is available. As long as medical science continued to generate arguably less painful alternatives for the anti-death penalty movement to champion, any method in use could be deemed unconstitutional. Because a legal challenge to a procedure can result in a moratorium on its use (indeed, a three-month nationwide moratorium on lethal injection has been in effect since the Court agreed to hear *Baze*), the proposed standard could indefinitely prevent states from enforcing the sentences of their courts.

By the terms of the Court's Eighth Amendment precedent, the challenge to the lethal injection cocktail should fail: At the very least, it is difficult to argue that a method used by 35 states (of the 36 that have the death penalty) fails the *Roper* test for a national consensus in favor of a practice. However, four justices (Stevens, Breyer, Ginsburg, and Souter) voted in 2005 to grant a stay of execution in a case concerning the same cocktail at issue in *Baze*. If they are joined by Kennedy, whose willingness to read heightened restrictions on capital punishment into the Eighth Amendment made him the deciding vote in *Roper*—and for whom the weight of international sentiment against all use of the death penalty could be relevant—the challenge will succeed.

As for *Kennedy* v. *Louisiana*, it is the case of Patrick Kennedy, sentenced to death for raping his eight-year-old stepdaughter (a crime for which he attempted to frame neighborhood youths) under a Louisiana statute making aggravated rape of children a capital crime. In his petition, the defendant relies on Supreme Court precedent holding that capital punishment for rape was unconstitutionally cruel and unusual because the finality of the sentence was disproportionate to the harm done to

MICHAEL RAMIREZ

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the victim, which fell short of death. The Court must now decide whether the unique susceptibility of a child to "negative influences"—which in *Roper* it deemed sufficient to spare a 17-year-old murderer—increases the harm done to an eight-year-old rape victim sufficiently to justify capital punishment for her protection.

Structurally, this case resembles *Roper*, insofar as it considers whether the nature of a particular crime can ever warrant capital punishment. As only six states make rape a capital crime, the defendant will argue that there is no national consensus in favor of the death penalty for rape (though a number of states, such as Colorado, have child-rape bills moving through their legislatures in reaction to the *Kennedy* case).

And should the *Roper* majority reconstitute itself, the similarities between the two cases would present an opportunity for yet another exploration of foreign opinions on the subject. According to Amnesty International, fewer than half of the nations with a death penalty on the books allow it for child rape. In its petition to the Court, the defense did not cite international law (though it did urge the Court to "pause" before condoning the execution of child rapists, as the practice, it argued, is "heavily tinged with the scourge of racism").

Should the Court strike down the Louisiana statute, the repercussions for criminal justice could go far beyond the realm of rape, depending on how broadly the decision is couched. As Louisiana argues in its brief, 15 out of 38 states and the federal government authorize capital punishment for crimes other than murder, including treason, espionage, aircraft piracy, and aggravated kidnapping. If the Court holds against the state on the grounds that death is always "grossly out of proportion" for a crime not resulting in death, one of the federal government's strongest defenses against double agents could be jeopardized.

Finally, largely neglected in recent death penalty jurisprudence is the spate of new research showing that capital punishment works. A 2003 study by Emory economics professor Hashem Dezhbakhsh, for example, projects that each execution prevents, on average, 18 murders; this is only the best known of a growing body of evidence which suggests that the death penalty has a significant deterrent effect. In the formless world of Eighth Amendment balancing tests, such evidence should weigh heavily in support of capital punishment, insofar as it suggests a greater contribution to the "acceptable goals of punishment" than previously supposed.

The justices now have two new opportunities to consider the compelling evidence that the death penalty has a significant deterrent effect. Whether the Court will be as ready to use such nontextual considerations to protect victims as to protect their attackers remains to be seen. ♦

Politically Correct Eugenics

Brownback and Kennedy do the right thing.

BY WESLEY J. SMITH

It is a bitter irony that even as we are enlarging our commitment to human equality in many areas, we are turning our backs on it in others. In particular, we may be about to eliminate from our society people with Down syndrome (DS) and other genetically caused disabilities.

With the development of prenatal genetic diagnosis, the drive toward eugenics has returned with a vengeance. Americans may heartily cheer participants in the Special Olympics, but we abort some 90 percent of all gestating infants diagnosed with genetic disabilities such as DS, dwarfism, and spina bifida. Not only that, but a study published in the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* in 2005 found that of the approximately 5,000 babies born with DS annually, only about 625 were born to mothers who knew of their baby's condition before birth. Together, these figures suggest that under the regimen of universal prenatal genetic testing urged upon us by the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, the number of DS babies born each year could plummet below 1,000.

This is precisely the purpose of testing, many will say. But others see that attitude as a denial of universal human equality. Moreover, many worry that parents of genetically disabled children are nudged toward the abortion option, a choice they might not make if a fuller and fairer picture were presented to them. Indeed, parents of babies diagnosed prenatally with DS reported in the study mentioned above that 23 percent of the physicians or genetics counselors they spoke with either "emphasized the negative" aspects of parenting such children or "urged" parents to choose abortion. (This, in contrast to 14 percent who emphasized the positive possibilities or counseled in favor of continuing the pregnancy.) And even when prenatal counseling is truly neutral, parents may not receive the depth and breadth of information

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or the emotional support required for a fully informed decision.

To prevent parents from being subtly or expressly pushed in making decisions about their genetically disabled child, a strange pair of bedfellows—Senators Edward Kennedy and Sam Brownback—have coauthored the "Prenatally and Postnatally Diagnosed Condition Awareness Act" (S 1810), which just passed its first committee hurdle.

Kennedy's adamant support for abortion rights infuriates pro-lifers, while Brownback is ardently pro-life, accused by paranoid liberals of harboring theocratic tendencies. Their disagreement about abortion notwithstanding, their bill would require parents faced with pre- and postnatal diagnoses of disability to receive "timely, scientific, and nondirective counseling about the conditions" as well as "up-to-date, comprehensive information about life expectancy, development potential, and quality of life" for a child born with Down syndrome or any other genetic disability, as well as "referrals to providers of key support services." Their hope, clearly, is that when parents receive a more complete picture, more of them will welcome their disabled babies into the world.

The case of cystic fibrosis is suggestive. After a prenatal genetic test was recently developed to detect this disease, the number of CF live births in Massachusetts plunged by about 50 percent. No one knows why—no studies have been done. But if this drop is due to eugenic abortion, perhaps some of these children would have been carried to term if their parents had been required to be informed that great progress is being made and CF is no longer a certain early childhood death sentence.

Or imagine the potential impact on parents agonizing over whether to abort their DS baby if they were presented with testimony to the joy that many parents of Down children discover. British sportswriter Simon Barnes, for instance, recounted his experience in the *Times* of London. "If you find the idea of love uncomfortable," Barnes wrote,

> or sentimental or best-not-talked-about or existing only in the midst of a passionate love affair, then you will find problems with what I am writing. I am writing of love not as a matter of grand passions, or as high-falutin' idealism, or as religion. I am writing about love as the stuff that makes the processes of human life happen: the love that moves the sun and other stars, which is also the love that makes the toast and other snacks. . . .
>
> What is it like to have Down's syndrome? How terrible is it? Is it terrible at all? It depends, I suppose, on how well loved you are. . . . I can't say I'm glad that Eddie has Down's syndrome, or that I would wish him to suffer in order to charm me and fill me with giggles. But no, I don't want his essential nature changed. Good God, what a thought. It would be as much a denial of myself as a denial of my son. . . . I am here to tell you that Down's syndrome is not an insupportable horror for either the sufferer or the parents. I'll go further: human beings are not better off without Down's syndrome.

A famous columnist once opined that only people who have the "moral authority" earned by hard experience should express opinions about such difficult matters. What Kennedy and Brownback hope to provide to parents of genetically disabled babies is the legal assurance that they will be provided information that is complete and informed—rather than counseling tainted by prejudice, ignorance, or fear. The Prenatally and Postnatally Diagnosed Condition Awareness Act may have a clunky name, but it is a noble and practical bill that deserves the support not only of those ideological opposites Kennedy and Brownback—but also of everybody in between. ♦

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Israel and the United States

Is Israel an asset or a burden to our country?

The United States is without question Israel's most important ally. Also, without question, Israel is the staunchest and most reliable friend of the United States. But there are some who believe and vigorously advocate that Israel is a burden to the United States and that, were it not for Israel, peace would prevail in the Middle East.

What are the facts?

The "Israel lobby." A patriotic-named foundation urges, in full-page ads in national newspapers (very expensive – who pays for it?), to influence Congress to withhold support for Israel. Professors from prestigious universities write essays in which they aver that the United States is in thrall to the "Israel lobby." This lobby is said to pull the strings of American policy. Its supposed main promoters are AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) and the so-called "neo-cons," some of whom are indeed Jewish. They are said to exert an almost magical spell over policy makers, including the leaders of Congress and the President. Some even say that the Iraq war was promoted by this omnipotent "Israel lobby," that the President was flummoxed into declaring war on Saddam Hussein, not in order to defend the United States or to promote its interests, but in order to further the interests of Israel.

> "Israel and the United States stand together in their fight against Islamo-fascist terrorism. These shared values will bind Israel and the United States forever."

Israel is indeed a major recipient of U.S. aid. Israel receives yearly $1.8 billion in military aid and $1.2 billion in economic aid, a substantial portion of our yearly aid budget. Almost all of the military aid is spent in the United States, making Israel one of the major customers of the U.S. defense industry. Virtually all of the economic assistance goes for repayment of debt to the United States, incurred from military purchases dating back many years.

America's staunchest ally. A good case can be made that aid to Israel, certainly the military portion, should be part of the United States defense budget, rather than of the aid budget because Israel is, next only perhaps to Britain, by far the most important ally of the United States. Virtually without exception, Israel's government and its people agree with and support the foreign policy objectives of the United States. In the United Nations, Israel's votes coincide with those of the United States over 90% of the time. The Arabs and other Moslem countries, virtually all of them recipients of American largess, almost reflexively vote against the United States in most instances.

Israel is the major strategic asset of the United States in an area of the world that is the cradle of Islamo-fascism, which is dominated by tyrants and permeated by religious obscurantism and shows almost total disregard for human rights. During the decades-long Cold War, Israel was America's indispensable rampart against the inroads of the Soviet Union. It is now the bulwark against the aggressive intentions of Iran. During Desert Storm, Israel provided invaluable intelligence, an umbrella of air cover for military cargo, and had personnel planted in the Iraqi deserts to pick up downed American pilots.

Gen. George Keagan, former head of U.S. Air Force Intelligence, stated publicly that "Israel is worth five CIAs," with regard to intelligence passed to our country. He also stated that the yearly $1.8 billion that Israel received in military assistance was worth $50 to $60 billion in intelligence, R&D savings, and Soviet weapons systems captured and transferred to the Pentagon. In contrast to our commitments in Korea, Japan, Germany, and other parts, not a single American serviceperson needs to be stationed in Israel. Considering that the cost of one serviceperson per year – including backup and infrastructure – is estimated to be about $200,000, and assuming a minimum contingent of 25,000 troops, the cost savings to the United States on that score alone is on the order of $5 billion a year.

Israel effectively secures NATO's southeastern flank. Its superb harbor, its outstanding military installations, the air and sea lift capabilities, and the trained manpower to maintain sophisticated equipment are readily at hand in Israel. It is the only country that makes itself available to the United States in any contingency. Yes, Israel is not a burden, but a tremendous asset to the United States.

Israel is indeed America's unsinkable aircraft carrier in the Middle East and the indispensable defender of America's interests in that area of the world. The people of the United States, individually and through their Congressional representatives, overwhelmingly support Israel in its seemingly unending fight against Arab aggression and Moslem terror. But that support is not based on the great strategic value that Israel represents to the United States. It is and always has been based on shared values of liberty, democracy, and human rights. America and Israel are aligned by their shared love of peace and democracy. Israel and the United States stand together in their fight against Islamo-fascist terrorism. These shared values, these common ideals, will bind Israel and the United States forever.

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Traders at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, March 18

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The Credit Crisis of 2008

As was the case a century ago, it's good to have a J.P. Morgan when you need one.

By Irwin M. Stelzer

The really bad news about the debt crisis is that it is sowing the seeds from which will bloom, if that is the right word, hundreds of doctoral dissertations five or so years hence. Economic model builders, unchastened by the fact that their predecessors' models failed to anticipate, indeed, contributed to the great crisis of 2008, will concoct elaborate equations designed to reveal whether it was the Fed's interest rate cuts, or its pumping of hundreds of billions into the credit markets, or the JPMorgan Chase-led takeover of Bear Stearns, or Hank Paulson doing whatever it is Treasury secretaries do in these circumstances, or the calming words of George W. Bush that brought the credit crunch to an end.

Given the political bent of most university economic departments, it is a safe bet that President Bush will be found to be on the cause-side of the balance sheet, not the cure-side. So, too, will former Fed chairman Alan Greenspan, whose fondness for free markets will prompt the academics to blame much of the problem of 2007-2008 on his 18-year tenure as manager-in-chief of U.S. monetary policy. Other than those certainties, we can expect an inconclusive duel to the death of bored audiences by competing econometric models.

Not that we have not already learned a great deal about crisis containment. For one thing, it is good to have a J.P. Morgan around. Students of history will remember that almost exactly 100 years ago, in 1907 to be exact, one J.P. Morgan rode to the rescue of a financial system on the verge of collapse—if one can imagine someone with the girth of the great 70-year-old banker riding to anything. It seems that the Knickerbocker Trust Company had backed speculators seeking to corner the market in shares of a copper company. They failed and so did the bank. Stuck with unmarketable securities it had accepted as collateral (cf.today's subprime mortgages and other securitized paper), it had insufficient cash to meet depositors' demands. Other banks grew nervous, refused to clear with Knickerbocker, and tightened credit to the point where credit-worthy borrowers such as New York City, Boston, and Westinghouse could not sell their IOUs.

> To clear the way for Morgan to swallow Bear, the president and the Treasury secretary agreed to have the taxpayers guarantee $30 billion of Bear's difficult-to-value assets. That puts taxpayers at risk, as the Fed had no time to do anything resembling due diligence.

Enter J.P. Morgan. He cobbled together a consortium including John D. Rockefeller and other elite members of the rich-and-famous club to put up tens of millions, the Treasury added $25 million of taxpayer money (a half billion in today's dollars), and trust-busting President Theodore Roosevelt told his attorney general, "I felt it no public duty of mine to interpose any objection" to the complicated rescue scheme.

The rescue took about two weeks. Bernanke and the current head of JPMorgan Chase, Jamie Dimon, managed a similar feat in two days. Bear Stearns is no more. In a mere 100 hours, shares in the 75-year-old investment bank, trading, and brokerage firm fell from $70 to $2, the price at which it was picked up by Morgan. Factor in the $1.2 billion at which Bear Stearns's Midtown Manhattan headquarters office building is valued, and Dimon got Bear for

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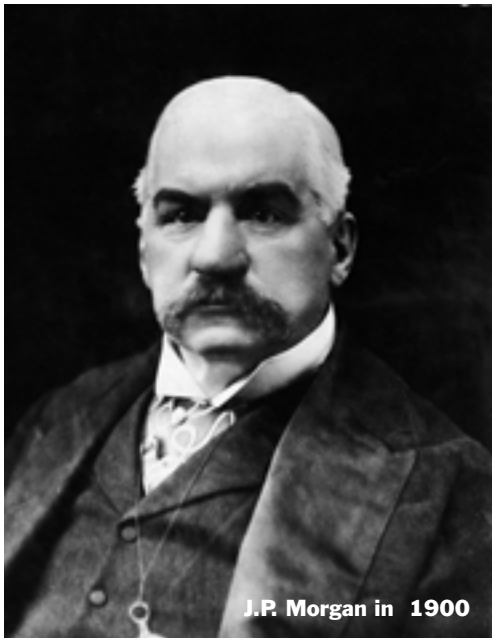
nothing. In this drama, Dimon played old J.P., and Hank Paulson played George Cortelyou, Roosevelt's Treasury secretary. Bernanke came on stage to show that Woodrow Wilson's decision to establish the Fed half a decade later was a good idea.

Which tells us something more about what future researchers will find: The era of free-market, no-government-intervention purists is over, if indeed it ever existed. Bush and Paulson have been leading the "no bailout" contingent, at least when it comes to poor, overextended homeowners trying to cope with suddenly higher payments as the teaser rates on their mortgages are reset. But to clear the way for Dimon to swallow Bear, the president and the Treasury secretary agreed to have the taxpayers guarantee $30 billion of Bear's difficult-to-value assets. That puts taxpayers at risk; the precise nature of Bear's assets and liabilities is unknown to the Fed, which had no time to do anything resembling due diligence if it was to complete the deal before Asian markets opened on Monday morning. If the assets prove dicey, taxpayers will have to cover the loss. The risk-takers are us. Paulson might insist that he allowed the government to take on billions in risk only to save the system, rather than any one company, but if it looks like a bailout, and smells like a bailout, it probably is a bailout, certainly of the Bear Stearns bondholders, although employees, many of whom have been partly paid in shares in recent years, will prefer the term "wipe-out."


J.P. Morgan in 1900

Paulson now finds that the intervention game he has learned to play might be more than the one-inning affair he had hoped. In for a penny, in for a pound, as British bankers say—although lately they have been willing to be in for neither. Democrats believe that government should insure mortgages that have been written down to current value (Barney Frank), send money to the states for the relief of homeowners facing foreclosure (Hillary Clinton), or provide those homeowners with help of a vague and unspecified sort (Barack Obama). Now that the Fed has decided that investment banks and brokers are too intimately interconnected with all the other players in the financial system to be allowed to fail—to the traditional "too big to fail" add "too interconnected to fail"—the taxpayer has become a key player. Not a new role: After all, the savings and loan crisis of the 1980s and 1990s came to an end only when the government tossed about $125 billion of taxpayer money at the problem.

Future researchers are also going to have to sort out the relationship between the Fed's monetary policy, the rate of inflation, the value of the dollar, the trade balance, and a host of other economic drivers. The March 18 cut in the so-called Fed funds rate, lowering it to 2.25 percent (a negative interest rate, when inflation is factored in) was only the latest in a three-percentage point cut since September of last year. As every economist knows, or thought he did, such a reduction in short-term rates will bring long-term rates, set in the market, down with them. Except that long-term rates, which are most relevant to businesses seeking to expand and consumers considering purchasing a car or a house, remain stubbornly high, diluting the stimulating effect of the Fed's actions. Many lenders believe that the Fed is playing too fast and loose with the money supply, and that the resultant inflation will drive down the value of the dollars with which they will be repaid. So they raise the price of their money—the interest rate that they charge for its use.

It seems that the inflation-wary have guessed right: Prices of food, energy, and just about everything that is not an electronic gadget have risen, and with them inflationary expectations. All exacerbated by the path of the dollar, which has been spiraling down. Despite singing that old tune, "American interests are served by a strong dollar," the administration is humming under its breath something like "down and down it goes, in a spin, and we are loving the spin it's in." A cheap dollar makes our goods less expensive abroad, stimulating exports and thus adding significant growth to a slowing economy. True, the decline in the value of the dollars that oil producers are getting for their crude causes them to raise the price in order to protect their ability to purchase arms and baubles in the world's poshest shops. They also worry that the imported laborers who do the work that their native populations find offensive are restive: The dollars these workers send home to their families are buying less and less. The last thing the rulers of Arab nations want is an uprising by foreign workers who in many cases outnumber the native population.

True, too, that the falling dollar has the Chinese very nervous. "What concerns me now is the continuous depre-

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ciation of the dollar," says Prime Minister Wen Jiabao. No wonder. The vaults of his country's central bank are overflowing with stacks of financially deteriorating green paper adorned with pictures of American presidents. But Bernanke has had to choose: shore up the financial system by pumping dollars into it in such amounts that the banks will start lending again or fight inflation by keeping interest rates high. It's an increasingly tough call, as the dissent by 2 of the 12 members of the Fed's monetary policy committee to the last rate cut demonstrates. Bernanke is betting that the economic slowdown will lower inflationary pressures, and that if he has uncorked the inflation genie he will be able to bottle it up again by raising interest rates once the current credit crisis has run its course.

All of this is being played out against a background of longer-term problems in the banking system. As more and more loans are being written off, the asset sides of banks' balance sheets are dropping. That reduces the banks' ability to take on liabilities, i.e., to make loans. And by a large multiple since banks typically lend many multiples of their assets, and for long periods. That's why runs on a bank can happen: If depositors or institutions that have lent the banks money on the basis of being able to get it back on demand decide *en masse* to show up at the teller's window with withdrawal slips in hand (it's done rather differently now, but many readers might find this description more comprehensible), there isn't enough cash on hand to satisfy the demand for it. Which is what happened in 1907, and why J.P. Morgan was forced to round up a group of men willing to put up their own money to prevent a run—some contributing "under penalty . . . of lacking assistance when the pinch should come home to them," as Carl Hovey put it in his 1911 biography of Morgan. I mention this only because when Long Term Capital Management went under in 1998, and Alan Greenspan organized a rescue effort by major banks in order to ease strains on the financial system, only Bear Stearns refused to help. Which might explain why the firm, famous for its macho, cigar-chomping, go-it-alone style found itself friendless just when it needed more than a few friends.

Two things have to happen before we put paid to the current problems. First, house prices have to bottom out. So long as they keep falling, which almost all experts expect them to do, the value of the mortgages held by the banks will fall. In the case of defaults, the banks are lucky to get half of the face value of the mortgage. And when a house is worth less than the mortgage, the circumstance in which an estimated 8 million homeowners now find themselves, and 14 million soon might, we get the phenomenon known as "jingle mail." That's the term used to describe the sound when the owners walk away from their house and mail the keys to whoever is responsible for collecting their monthly payments of interest and principal.

J.P. Morgan was forced to round up a group of men willing to put up their own money to prevent a run—some contributing 'under penalty . . . of lacking assistance when the pinch should come home to them,' as Carl Hovey put it in his 1911 biography of the banker.

Second, banks will have to raise more capital. Paulson wants them to stop paying dividends and retain those funds as new capital. This, the boards of most banks do not want to do, lest shareholders, many now holding onto their shares because dividends seem so generous, rise up in indignation. (Citigroup, which 10 years ago fired Dimon, has to maintain a dividend yield of over 6 percent to get anyone to hold its shares.) Bank presidents are making pilgrimages to the Middle East to meet with managers of sovereign wealth funds, which are attractive sources of capital from the point of view of bank executives for two reasons. These funds—the surplus revenues of oil-rich governments—are in for the long haul, and they are passive investors rather than the sort who complain when bank executives mess up.

But once burned, twice shy. Sovereign wealth funds have watched the value of their investments in American banks wither under the dual blows of falling share prices and a declining dollar. At one time these foreigners were seen as a source of "dumb money," which they earned merely by watching oil flow from the ground. No longer: They have taken on professional managers, and are also reserving a bit more of their wealth for internal development, as a glance at the skylines of many Middle Eastern cities makes abundantly clear.

How the banks will solve their need for capital no one can predict. My own guess is that we will see a combination of dividend cuts, the emergence of "bottom fishers" (investors who at some point decide bank shares are under-valued), and a call on taxpayers to swallow hard and ante up to rescue the banking system, even if that means also coming to the aid of bleating bankers. You know, the guys who were so generous to you when you came around for help without so much collateral that you didn't really need any help at all. ♦

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Lessons from the Great Crash

The New Deal turns 75 as the United States faces another credit crisis requiring government measures to restore confidence.

By James Piereson

It was 75 years ago, on March 4, 1933, that Franklin Delano Roosevelt appeared on the steps of the Capitol to take the presidential oath, declaring in his inaugural address that "the only thing we have to fear is fear itself" and promising "direct, vigorous action" to confront the unprecedented economic crisis facing the nation.

Roosevelt's speech was short on specifics about his bold new measures, and he did not use the term "New Deal"—though he had used it extensively during his presidential campaign. But the "New Deal" soon became the catchall phrase for the philosophy and the legislative accomplishments by which his administration is known. Roosevelt's leadership during those difficult years turned him into the most popular figure of his era, an authentic hero in the eyes of liberals and Democrats—and for many Republicans, a sinister demagogue and a traitor to his class.

The passage of time has not settled the controversies that grew up around the New Deal. It is easy today to find enthusiasts who look back on it as the foundation of the American welfare state and critics who see in it as an attack on American capitalism. There are leftwing historians who think Roosevelt should have gone much further in the direction of public ownership and welfare provision, and there are respected economists who say that the New Deal actually impeded recovery from the Depression. Ronald Reagan was accused of trying to roll back the New Deal, though this was manifestly untrue; if he tried to roll back anything, it was Lyndon Johnson's Great Society. Eminent liberals like Arthur Schlesinger Jr. and John Kenneth Galbraith claimed that the Depression discredited free market capitalism. They must have thought that history was playing a cruel joke when Reagan led a revival of market doctrines during the 1980s.

There is little political support today for rolling back any of the New Deal programs that continue to operate. (President Bush got nowhere with his modest proposal to introduce private savings accounts into Social Security.) But the New Deal remains an ideological touchstone in any debate about the appropriate role for government in our economy.

Roosevelt sounded an urgent populist theme in his inaugural address, placing the blame for the Depression squarely on the shoulders of bankers and industrial leaders who had put profit above the public interest. "The money changers have fled from their high seats in the temple of our civilization," he said. "We may now restore that temple to ancient truths. The measure of restoration lies in the extent to which we may apply social values more noble than mere monetary profit." Somewhat more ominously, he suggested that if the nation's inherited constitutional arrangements should prove inadequate to the task, he was prepared to call for a "temporary departure from that normal balance of public procedure." Roosevelt would pound on these two themes—hostility to big business and a readiness to break with tradition—throughout the 1930s.

The fact that Roosevelt's rhetoric was warmly received is a measure of the desperation felt by many Americans at the time. The dimensions of the catastrophe were overwhelming by any known measure. Following the stock market crash of 1929, real economic output in the United States declined by 30 percent and unemployment rose from 4 percent to 25. Stocks fell from a high of 381 in September of 1929 to 42 in mid-1932, turning Wall Street into a virtual ghost town and wiping out investors large and small. The dollar value of U.S. exports fell by two-thirds between 1929 and 1933. Nearly half of the banks in the United States had

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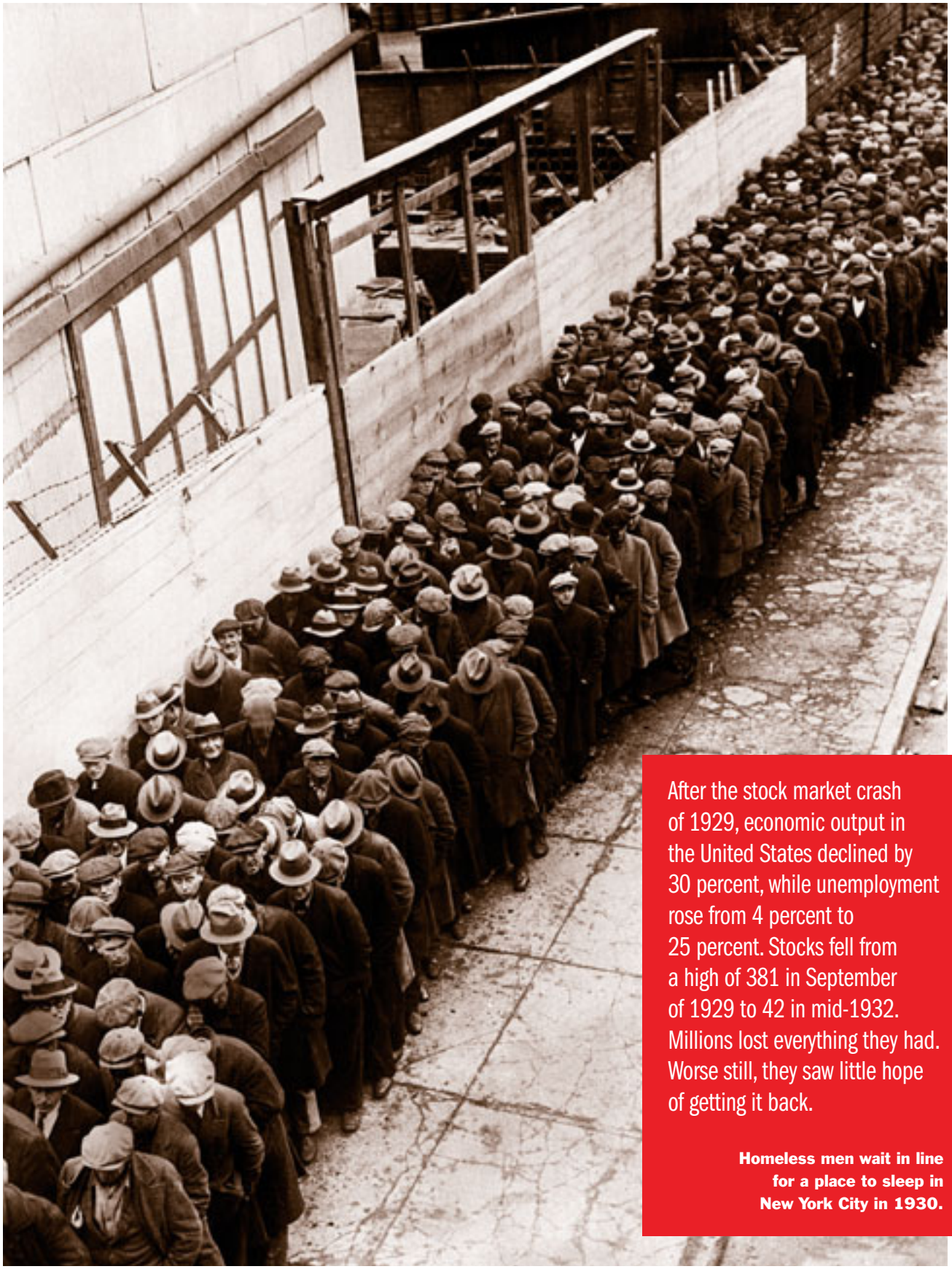

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After the stock market crash of 1929, economic output in the United States declined by 30 percent, while unemployment rose from 4 percent to 25 percent. Stocks fell from a high of 381 in September of 1929 to 42 in mid-1932. Millions lost everything they had. Worse still, they saw little hope of getting it back.

Homeless men wait in line for a place to sleep in New York City in 1930.

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Depositors congregate outside a closed bank in New York in 1931.

BETTMANN / CORBIS

either failed or merged with other banks by the time Roosevelt came to office in 1933. In the process, millions lost everything. Worse, they saw little hope of getting it back.

The Depression was viewed in many circles as a sign of the impending doom of the capitalist order. Few were confident that the economy could be revived on the basis of the old principles. Intellectuals began to choose sides between socialist and fascist solutions to the crisis. Socialist parties received more than a million votes in the 1932 presidential election. Once in office, Roosevelt was attacked from both ends of the spectrum by extremists like Huey Long and Father Coughlin demanding measures to "share the wealth." Fascist and Communist parties advanced abroad in the wake of the worldwide economic collapse. Hitler came to power in Germany only five weeks before Roosevelt's inauguration.

Viewed in this context, Roosevelt's New Deal measures do not appear quite so radical. He would eventually say in response to critics that it had been his own actions "which saved the system of private profit and free enterprise after it had been dragged to the brink of ruin." He had a point. Among the industrial nations of the time, the United States was one of the few that did not eventually take the socialist path. From the distance of seven decades, it seems fair to suggest that the New Deal did far more to modernize and stabilize American capitalism than it did to undermine it.

Roosevelt's first term is conventionally divided into two periods: the so-called First New Deal, which was largely enacted in 1933 during Roosevelt's first hundred days in office, and the Second New Deal of 1935, in which Roosevelt pushed into territory that went well beyond the immediate economic crisis of the time.

The First New Deal was made up of measures designed to stabilize the banking system, to restore agricultural production, and to provide relief to the destitute. Few of them were radical in nature, and there was no clear ideological pattern.

Reversing the cascade of bank failures was an especially high priority for the New Deal, and in the process Roosevelt modernized the American banking system. He took the United States off the gold standard (one of the last nations to do so), provided for a system of deposit insurance, regulated the public sale of securities by requiring the registration of stocks and the disclosure to markets of pertinent information, and created a wall of separation between commercial and investment banking—the latter arising from the conviction that many bank failures had been caused by inappropriate speculation in stocks.

Most of these reforms, though crafted to deal with the immediate crisis, remain with us today. Deposit insurance, securities regulation, and the federal regulation of banks remain pillars of the modern system of credit and capital. The abandonment of the gold standard, while criticized by bankers at the time as an attack on sound money, is generally viewed as a necessary step to reverse the credit contraction. Central bankers, when faced with speculative attacks on their currencies, generally responded by raising interest rates and tightening credit in order to preserve exchange values in relation to gold—moves which only worsened the Depression. (The Glass-Steagall Act, which separated commercial from investment banking, was repealed in 1999.)

The New Deal is closely associated among critics with large-scale public employment programs and with heavy-handed regulatory initiatives that sought to create a centrally managed economy. What is important to note is that none of these highly controversial programs survived Roosevelt's terms in office, and they cannot be regarded as parts of the New Deal legacy.

Two major public employment programs, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)—the model for Lyndon

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The First New Deal consisted primarily of measures to stabilize the banking system, to restore agricultural production, and to provide jobs and relief to the destitute. Few of these measures could be called radical in nature, with one exception being Roosevelt's National Industrial Recovery Act, later ruled unconstitutional.

A 1934 Clifford K. Berryman cartoon from the Washington *Evening Star*

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Johnson's poverty program—and the Public Works Administration (PWA), were erected during Roosevelt's first hundred days. The CCC created more than 1,000 work camps to provide jobs for the young in various conservation efforts (reforestation, flood control, and management of public parks). The PWA put unemployed adults to work building roads, dams, and public buildings. These programs were augmented in 1935 by the Works Progress Administration, which also employed several million workers in the late 1930s. Yet all of these programs were out of business by 1943, when mobilization for the war made them unnecessary.

One clear exception to the pattern of legislation under the First New Deal was the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA), which created a regulatory body (the National Recovery Administration) with broad powers to regulate wages, prices, and competitive practices. The act originated in the belief that the Depression had been caused by price cutting and unfair competitive practices in major industries (yes, competitive price cutting was thought to be unfair). NIRA reflected the corporatist outlook of Roosevelt advisers like Rexford Tugwell who believed that some form of economic planning was needed to prevent another collapse. The planners had their way as they hammered out complex wage and price codes in consultation with major manufacturers and labor unions. Yet the system rapidly proved to be too complex to be workable. NIRA is an obvious source of the New Deal's reputation for ham-fisted regulation. It was also short-lived; in 1935 the Supreme Court struck it down, by unanimous decision, as an unconstitutional delegation of power from Congress to the executive branch.

The Second New Deal took shape in 1935 following the 1934 midterm elections in which the Democrats added to their majorities in the House and Senate. The election was a mandate, Roosevelt said, and proved "that we are on the right track." The Second New Deal added two pillars to the nation's political economy: the Social Security Act, which established old-age insurance, unemployment insurance, and welfare benefits for widows and orphans, and the Wagner Act, which provided federal mechanisms for organizing unions and for collective bargaining in private industry. Over the long term, these proved to be the most politically potent of the New Deal measures.

Little needs to be said about the popularity of Social Security and the difficult challenges faced even today by reformers who would adjust the system. The Wagner Act greatly facilitated the formation of unions in major industries in the late 1930s much to the consternation of big business. Union membership expanded in the United States, from around one million in 1935 to nearly 10 million in 1940 and continuing upwards through the 1960s—a period during which industrial unions were key elements of the Democratic political coalition.

With these measures, Roosevelt laid the basis for the New Deal's long-running political appeal and influence. They established a precedent for building political majorities through federal programs and employment. Here,

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New York postal workers cheer the unveiling of an NRA banner in 1934.

BETTMANN / CORBIS

then, was a legacy of the New Deal that, in retrospect, was far more influential than its various regulatory measures.

The legislative breakthroughs of 1935 marked the high point of the New Deal. Roosevelt, in keeping with his political practice, saw the landslide election of 1936 as a mandate to make another bold step, this time in taking on the Supreme Court which had declared unconstitutional his farm program and NIRA and seemed on the verge of striking down both the Wagner and the Social Security Acts. Roosevelt's proposal to expand the Court to give him as many as six new appointments drew immediate opposition from members of Congress and the public, who appeared ready to draw the line on the New Deal when it came to fundamental alterations of the Constitution. The court-packing plan was a fiasco for Roosevelt and effectively marked the end of the creative period of the New Deal.

Fortunately for Roosevelt, Justice Owen Roberts switched his vote in key decisions in 1937, turning a 5-4 majority against the New Deal into a similar majority in support. An early sign of this shift was the Court's decision in April 1937 to uphold the constitutionality of the Wagner Act. When conservative justice Willis Van Devanter retired at the end of the 1937 term, FDR was given the appointment he needed to place his own stamp on the Court.

Though critics and supporters alike have said that the New Deal laid the foundations for the American welfare state, it is more accurate to say that it set up a social insurance state. The enduring pillars of the New Deal—old-age insurance, deposit insurance, unemployment insurance—were not redistributionist measures but insurance provisions compatible with traditional notions of individual responsibility. Even the welfare provisions of the Social Security Act were drawn up to aid only widows and orphans. The New Dealers were borrowing from the various insurance provisions that were enacted in Germany in the 1880s under Bismarck who saw in them a means to outmaneuver the socialists who were calling for more extreme measures on behalf of workers. In the battle within the New Deal—between the collectivists and planners on the one hand and the advocates for traditional ideals of individual responsibility—the individualists clearly had their way on the most important questions.

Despite their best efforts, however, the New Dealers were unable to pull the economy out of depression. While it began to grow again after 1933 and the unemployment rate fell to 14 percent by 1937, a recession that year provoked Roosevelt and fellow New Dealers into ever more extreme attacks on the business community. Roosevelt denounced the rich for bringing about the recession through a "capital strike"—precisely the kind of nonsense that would later give the New Deal a bad name among business leaders. Many economists argue that New Deal policies, to the extent that they promoted unionization and imposed new taxes on business, created an environment that discouraged business investment and thus impeded full recovery from the Depression.

The New Deal was based on a couple of propositions about the Depression that appear in retrospect to have been highly questionable. The first was that the

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Rather than laying the foundations for a welfare state, it is more accurate to say that the New Deal set up a social insurance state. The enduring pillars of the New Deal—old-age insurance, deposit insurance, unemployment insurance—were not redistributionist measures but insurance provisions compatible with traditional notions of individual responsibility.

A 1934 poster promoting Social Security registration

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Depression was a crisis of overproduction that led to falling prices and unemployment, a proposition that was the basis for the industrial codes of the NIRA and of the New Deal's agricultural programs, which sought to limit farm production even as people around the country were in need of food. The second proposition was that the crisis had been caused by the malfeasance of bankers and stock manipulators in tandem with the monopoly power exercised by industrialists, a conviction which encouraged much of the anti-business rhetoric of the New Deal. This latter proposition was incorporated into the official histories of the period written by luminaries like Schlesinger (*The Crisis of the Old Order*) and Galbraith (*The Great Crash*). When these two propositions were joined, they suggested that the old order of individualism and competition was discredited and should be replaced by a system of managed capitalism. Though this was not the actual agenda of the New Deal as it developed, it was thought by some to be the logical next step beyond it.

The Great Depression was actually caused by the restrictive interest-rate policies followed by the Federal Reserve Board in 1928 and 1929. Milton Friedman and Anna Schwartz pioneered this interpretation in their *Monetary History of the United States* (1963). The economic crisis, which they termed "the great contraction," was triggered when the Federal Reserve Board began to tighten interest rates in 1928 to discourage speculation in stocks and then continued a tight money policy even after the stock market collapsed and banks began to fail. Things were exacerbated by the failure of the monetary authorities to step in with infusions of capital to rescue failing banks and by political decisions like the Smoot-Hawley tariff bill which shut down trade and led to more restrictive credit policies around the world. The New Deal attacks on big business were nothing more than so much flailing in the wind.

This interpretation of the Depression is held by no less a figure than Ben Bernanke, the current chairman of the Federal Reserve Board and a careful student of the crisis. At a testimonial occasion to mark Milton Friedman's 90th birthday, Bernanke went so far as to say to the economist: "Regarding the Great Depression, you were right. We [the Federal Reserve Board] did it. We're very sorry. But thanks to you, we won't do it again."

In the end, the constitutional system that Roosevelt sought to alter imposed its limits on the New Deal, casting aside its more extreme measures while digesting its more constructive elements. By the time Republicans returned to power in the 1950s, New Deal programs were no longer seen as radical or even controversial. If Roosevelt did not "save" capitalism, he at least steered it through its greatest crisis by engineering a package of moderate and constructive reforms that, for the most part, met the test of time. For this reason alone, he richly earned the admiration of Americans at the time and a place in the pantheon of America's great presidents. ♦

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Peter O'Toole as Lord Jim *(1965)*

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES / GETTY IMAGES

One Writer's Voyage

For Joseph Conrad, the pain of creation BY JANET GEZARI

Unlike Vladimir Nabokov, an established Russian writer who became an American writer, Joseph Conrad emerged as an English writer with the publication of his first novel in 1895. Born in 1857 in a part of the Ukraine that had once been Poland, and named Theodor Jozef Konrad Korzeniowski, he went to sea, first with the French and then with the British. After two decades of travel to Africa, India, and the Pacific rim, he rose to the top of his chosen profession by passing his examination for Master in the British Merchant Service.

Then he reinvented himself as a great modernist writer.

Conrad spoke English with a heavy Polish accent and wrote it as no one before him ever had. Although he called his first book "an inexplicable event," he believed that writing in English came as naturally to him as "any other aptitude" with which he might have been born. He identified his point of view, at sea and on land, as "English," but described himself as "Homo duplex" rather than "an Englishman." "Homo complex" might have been more precise: There was hardly anything about which he did not feel more than two things at the same time.

The Several Lives of Joseph Conrad
by John Stape
Pantheon, 400 pp., $30

Irony was the primary strain of Conrad's being. It inspired E.M. Forster's remark that "the secret casket of his genius contains a vapor rather than a jewel." That Conrad's beliefs are so much foggier than his doubts may account for the relatively small number of biographies since 1960. The best is still Zdzislaw Najder's, published in 1983, and the most substantial achievement of Conrad scholarship is the nine-volume Cambridge edition of his letters, completed in 2008. John Stape, the author of this new biography, has edited or coedited two volumes of the letters as well as a long list of other Conrad publications. He knows the facts of Conrad's life as well as anybody does.

Stape flushes out many facts we've not seen before. He sets various records straight, debunking myths about Conrad and making sure not to create any himself. But in avoiding the temptation to fictionalize Conrad's life, Stape runs into difficulties just as profound. Most readers are interested in Conrad's life because they are interested in his fiction, but there is more information in this biography than is pertinent to an understanding of the man who wrote Conrad's works. There is also less infor-

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mation than we want about Conrad's several lives as a husband, father, friend, reader, writer among writers, and inhabitant of his own time and place.

Conrad's writing life was always a stop-and-go event. His usual practice was to commit himself to a novel and then interrupt work on it to take up a short story. The short story would grow into a larger project that kept him from meeting his deadline. John Batchelor, another Conrad biographer, describes this pattern as a sort of seesawing between responsible and irresponsible behavior. The tension between high ambition and an ordinary, even sordid, reality (a Romantic theme that shows up often in Conrad's fiction) strengthened the appeal a new story always had for him. There it was, beckoning from a distance and still in the offing. And here was the condition from which he wanted relief.

"I write in doubt over every line," he says in one of his letters. "I ask myself—is it right?—is it true?—do I feel it so? do I express all my feeling? And I ask it at every sentence—I perspire in incertitude over every word!"

Conrad's bouts of despair were persistent, along with gout and dental problems. He was 39 when he asked Jessie George to marry him, and although he would live to be 66, he told her they had to move quickly because he had so little time left. Ironically, Jessie, 16 years younger than her husband, was violently ill on their honeymoon and struggled for the rest of her life with obesity, neuralgia, a defective heart valve, and a leg so painful that her doctors considered amputating it.

Financial difficulties haunted Conrad, even after he had gained considerable fame, and Stape provides a scrupulous account of his earnings and expenditures. With the help of the Economic History Services website (www.eh.net) he gives "pound sterling equivalents in terms of today's values," using "the average earnings index as the most effective indicator of relative value."

The figures, about which Stape is precise, are meant to give us more information but end up giving us less. What does it mean that Conrad was paid £126 for a short story (a figure Stape puts as equivalent to £47,000 today) or that an annual average wage was £100 ("roughly £38,200 today")? Can we put Conrad's assertion that "life on £600 a year" was "impossible" into clearer perspective because the "equivalent" income in 2005 would be £218,000?

The equivalents don't take into account the very different rates of change for different expenses—food, housing, travel, medical care—and earnings. All that is clear is that Conrad

Joseph Conrad

and his family lived beyond his means and beyond what he could beg or borrow from friends, so that he was always under financial pressure.

In his preface, Stape announces that he is not writing a critical biography. Fair enough. Critical biographies of Conrad are guilty of producing multiple fictions about him as Conrad gets confused with his characters and psychoanalysis holds open its bag of easy tricks. The relation between a writer's life and his fiction is complicated.

As Conrad reminds us in his preface to *A Personal Record*, "every novel contains an element of autobiography" and "the creator can only express himself in his creation." But the biographer who attributes Marlow's attitude towards women to Conrad, or brings Decoud's depression and suicide (in *Nostromo*) too firmly to bear on Conrad's experience of such things, will produce a reductive account of the man and his life. The relation between Conrad's historical experience in the Congo and the experience of *Heart of Darkness* is complex precisely because Conrad's experience has been thoroughly shaped to belong to the character he calls Marlow.

An engaging biography of Conrad will have to deliver more than the bald facts. The best biography will make the fiction more accessible to us according to a method Conrad himself describes in *Heart of Darkness* when Marlow says that the four friends listening to his story can "see more" of his experience than he could have when he was caught up in it because they see him.

The idea here isn't the one we have from psychoanalysis—that the dream enables us to see ourselves more clearly—but the reverse. It is the knowledge of the self that makes the dream clearer. A biography of a writer makes the same promise. We should be able to see more about the fiction because we have seen Conrad more fully.

Stape is characteristically restrained and determinedly unimaginative about Conrad's intimate life with women. He persuasively demolishes the claims of more than one candidate for a tortured love affair, and describes Conrad's romantic history before marriage as mostly "a blank." Conrad's friends and his biographers have asked why he proposed to Jessie George, and Stape offers no answer. We know that she was not her husband's intellectual equal, not well educated, and not a reader, but she provided stability and support, two children, and excellent meals. During Conrad's lifetime, at least, she refrained from criticizing him.

Can we know anything more about their marriage? Perhaps very little, but Conrad's occasional letters to her (they were rarely apart) are tender, and his own defense of his marriage, in a letter to Edward Garnett, who tried to dissuade him from it, is intriguing. He wrote that Jessie was "not at all dangerous" and that "fidelity to passing emotions" might be "a nearer approach to truth than any other philosophy of life."

The Several Lives of Joseph Conrad also doesn't illuminate the elements of Conrad's life that have recently been most interesting to readers of his fiction. While there is increasing agreement that

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Conrad was one of the earliest agents of Western imperialism to come to know its deep horror, charges of racism, sexism, and anti-Semitism continue to be leveled against him.

Stape is prone to exoticism. A particularly egregious example is his description of Conrad's exploration of Singapore, where the city's "Chinese, Malays, and Tamils formed a colourful backdrop, much like the decorations marking Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee, celebrated just before his arrival." His response to Conrad's characterization of the brother-in-law of Ford Hermann Hueffer (later Ford Maddox Ford) as "that horrible Jew" is that Conrad's "anti-Semitism, however crude, was casual," and that his "hostility had deep roots" because Soskice was Russian.

It would be interesting to have more context for this. Conrad was born, as Stape points out earlier, not only in a part of Russia that had been Poland but in a town where the overwhelming majority of the population was Jewish. Charged late in life, though not for the first time, with being Jewish, Conrad wrote that had he "been an Israelite" he would "never have denied being a member of a race occupying such a unique place in the religious history of mankind." This interesting formulation opens up his conception of identity, race, and nationality, but it does not close the question of his anti-Semitism.

Conrad was a huge letter writer, and his tone is generous, affectionate, and cheery, even when he is reporting on his depression. The letters bear witness to his immense reading and to a very active social life among visitors, friends, and collaborators. While he was alive and writing, the nature of literature was changing. Joyce, Woolf, Forster, Eliot, Pound, James, and Lawrence were all at work alongside him, as were the Edwardian novelists, Bennett, Wells, and Galsworthy. Stape's decision not to quote much from the letters registers his determination to keep this biography relatively short. It is also consistent with his sense that Conrad is an unreliable narrator, especially with respect to the facts of his own life. But it leaves me longing for the sound of Conrad's voice and more of the tone of his feeling. ♦

Founders Keepers

Joseph J. Ellis and his bestselling formula.

BY BRENDAN MCCONVILLE

Over the last dozen years or so, popular interest in the Founding Fathers has risen to new heights. Writers, journalists, and academics have turned with great vigor (and great profit) to the stories of Jefferson, John Adams, Madison, Washington, Hamilton, Franklin, and Sam Adams, as well as lesser-known figures like Gouverneur Morris, Nathanael Greene, John Jay, Dolly Madison, and even the period's great rogue, Aaron Burr.

American Creation
Triumph and Tragedies at the Founding of the Republic
by Joseph J. Ellis
Knopf, 304 pp., $26.95

A willing public consumes these biographies and histories without pause. One after the other has climbed the bestseller lists as its author appeared on the now-cancelled "Booknotes" (C-SPAN). This fascination with the founding generation remains so strong that HBO has just brought David McCullough's *John Adams* to the same screen that has given us *The Sopranos* and *Big Love*.

How are we to explain this fascination at a time when Americans' interest in reading is claimed to be at an all-time low, and polls of our basic historical knowledge show a humiliating lack of it? To look for one cause is hopeless. Changes in the academy, a backlash against academic studies of the period that seemed to put more emphasis on quilting and sex than seems warranted, changes in the structure of publishing houses, and the continuation of the editing projects that make the papers of the founders readily available to the general population—all encouraged this outpouring of books.

The revolutionary generation is also lucky to have found, at the turn of the 21st century, a cohort of talented writers, many of them not professional historians, who are interested in the Founders.

The proliferation of these studies is also related to shifts in national mood, first after the Berlin Wall came down, and then again after the crises during 2001-03. It is safe to say that a fuller understanding of these is necessary to comprehend how one book after another about the Founders could become a bestseller. As a people, we tend, in moments of change or crisis, to turn to figures in our past, particularly the Founders, for guidance back to our core values, and for a kind of national reassurance.

Joseph J. Ellis's *American Creation* strongly reflects the current obsession with the Founders. Ellis, who teaches at Mount Holyoke and is winner of the Pulitzer Prize for *Founding Brothers*, as well as the author of highly regarded studies of Adams and Jefferson, did as much as anyone to create this intense interest in the Founders. Certainly, he is the equal of anyone as a storyteller, and has built a public following surpassed, perhaps, only by that of David McCullough.

American Creation is a collection of seven essays (a prologue and six chapters), vignettes of the revolutionary period stretching from the imperial collapse in 1775-76 to the purchase of Louisiana in 1803. The first of these examines the year of crisis, between the assembling of the Second Continental Congress in 1775 and the writing and

Brendan McConville, professor of history at Boston University, is the author, most recently, of The King's Three Faces: The Rise and Fall of Royal America, 1688 to 1776.

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adopting of the Declaration in 1776. Ellis goes on to examine the impact of Valley Forge, the creation of the Constitution, failed treaty negotiations with a Creek Indian nation's leader, Alexander McGillivray, the origins of the Jeffersonian party and the first party system, and the Louisiana Purchase.

These essays provide sketches of moments that Ellis sees as critical to understanding the revolutionary era and the Founders' character. As always, his style is admirable: Ellis is smooth, provides coherent narrative threads, and generally reads very easily. He is one of the stronger academic writers, maybe the strongest, active in the field of early American history. That said, *American Creation* is not a very interesting book. It offers little, if anything, new for general readers of this genre, and nothing new for scholars.

Thomas Paine? He almost brought on the Revolution himself with *Common Sense*, despite the crankiness of the equally important John Adams. Valley Forge? Nasty and cold, until Baron Von Steuben began to straighten out the army and Washington got the states and his own strategy into line. Indians? Treated badly, despite Washington's best intentions. The Constitution? Unintended in its structure, opposed by able men like Patrick Henry, but nonetheless a brilliantly pragmatic solution to political problems both immediate and philosophical in their nature. The Louisiana Purchase? A superb bargain and a damn good idea that almost never happened because of Jefferson's dithering. The Lewis and Clark expedition? Forget the moon missions! The greatest adventure of exploration in American history.

No doubt many readers will agree with these assessments, but they are the insights of the typical seventh-grade history textbook until the advent of "social studies" in our middle and high schools in the 1960s began the process of turning the American public into a nation of historical semiliterates.

Certainly, Ellis and the others who have participated in this revived presentation of the Founders' stories have provided a real service: They have helped reconnect us to a coherent and usable past that includes the actions of actual people as reasons for dramatic changes. But to pretend that any real insight has been offered in *American Creation* or many of the other books in this genre is to do just that—pretend.

Madison's Montpelier by Baroness Anne Marguerite Hyde de Neuville (1818)

COURTESY OF THE MUSÉE DE BLÉRANCOURT, FRANCE

Part of the problem is that *American Creation* is dependent on the aforementioned presidential papers and related editorial projects as its primary basis. These provide a vital source, but if you use them to the degree that Ellis and others do, you end up not only adopting the same perspective as those who write the papers, but saying the same things over and over again. There is no evidence in *American Creation* of any archival research and more surprisingly, no evidence of research in the period's myriad newspapers and pamphlets now available online and word-searchable through the entrepreneurial efforts of the American Antiquarian Society and the Readex Corporation. These, too, contain a wealth of information, and would have provided a much more nuanced understanding of the period and its problems than is evident here.

Such nuance would have helped in many ways. Particularly troubling is Ellis's portrayal of the origins of the Jeffersonian-Republicans and the first party system. His insistence on portraying the Jeffersonians as a conspiratorial southern party, the "projection onto their enemies of a deceptive agenda with which they had a deep and intimate experience," led by Virginia planters fearful of a Northern, monied conspiracy against the Revolution and slavery, flies in the face of 20 years of scholarship that demonstrates the party's appeal in the Middle Atlantic and New England states. His main evidence for this slave power conspiracy seems to be a vague statement made by Nathaniel Macon in an 1818 letter, almost 30 years after the events that Ellis focuses on in the chapter!

In fact, small farmers, ambitious, scrambling entrepreneurs, and other dissidents in the North gave the Republicans strong support in western Pennsylvania, parts of New Jersey, upstate New York, Vermont, and the Maine district of Massachusetts. The humble as well as the mighty found meaning in an ideology that called for small government, limited state intervention in private lives, and a jealous guardianship of what they called the Spirit of 1776. Some slaveholders with agendas related to the "peculiar institution" supported the Jeffersonians, but most of its supporters cannot be characterized this way. It may make for a better story to portray Jefferson and Madison as paranoid slaveholders, and the party they created as the expression of their fears, but it hardly makes for good history. Nor does it do justice to the available sources and the events they document.

Ellis's lack of subtlety in interpretation is, in spots, linked to a lack

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of factual command. We are told, for example, that Nathanael Greene "bested the most accomplished British general, Lord Charles Cornwallis, on multiple occasions." In fact, Greene famously lost every battle he fought against Cornwallis, but in a fashion that provided the British commander with hollow victories. Only Greene's subordinates defeated British troops in the field, in small-unit engagements while on detached service.

Such errors further erode the reader's confidence in the scholarly apparatus at the foundation of *American Creation*. The desire to write well and play the part of public intellectual is no excuse for weak scholarship; indeed, the role would seem to demand just the opposite, a powerful command of the period that allows the scholar to speak with an authority that gives the reader confidence.

Perhaps, collectively, we need to be more restrained in what we ask of these men and women, some now nearing the advanced age of 300 years. Maybe they have done all they could do by providing us a malleable but workable (and astonishingly durable) constitutional framework, as well as their own copious papers to help make sense of change over time in revolutionary America.

These are magnificent legacies, and to ask for more, to place more weight on them, to overwork and overcommercialize them, is to court a kind of trouble more serious than that caused by revealing their foibles and sexual peccadilloes. The Founders can be neither priests nor rabbis to us, nor demons or dark preachers. They are not even a sure guide to the dilemmas we now find ourselves in as a nation and a people.

Of course, this leaves it up to us to solve the problems of our time, and a real knowledge of why people and societies change is a handy tool in doing so. When the stories of the revolutionary generation and their times are twisted to fit our needs or to sell books, we do damage not only to them, but to ourselves. We deserve better, and so do they. ♦

By the People

Democracy isn't everyone's idea of freedom.

BY ARCH PUDDINGTON

During the middle 1970s, the condition of global freedom had reached so discouraging a state that even Daniel Patrick Moynihan, a man known for his bullish optimism about the strength of Western institutions, seemed ready to write the obituary of the democratic idea. In the wake of the suspension of constitutional rights by India's prime minister, Indira Gandhi, Moynihan was driven to lament that

> Liberal democracy on the American model increasingly tends to the condition of monarchy. In the nineteenth century, a holdover form of government, one which persists in peculiar or isolated places . . . but has simply no relevance to the future. It is where the world was, not where it is going.

Democracy Without Borders
Global Challenges to Liberal Democracy
by Marc F. Plattner
Rowman & Littlefield, 176 pp., $24.95

Others were writing similarly, if less flamboyantly, about freedom's perilous condition. Democracy, they declared, might function well in Western Europe and much of the English-speaking world, but as a method of governance it was utterly unsuited to the societies of the developing world. By contrast, communism, the principal alternative to liberal democracy, seemed on the march, having retained *in toto* the global empire it accumulated after World War II while gaining additional power in Southeast Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Yet in less than two decades, the global balance of power had undergone a dramatic shift, as dictatorships, juntas, and Politburos collapsed in practically every region of the world, in most cases to be replaced by elected governments with a commitment to free speech and a range of civil liberties. With the demise of the Soviet Union in 1992, Francis Fukuyama would confidently write that there was no viable political alternative to Western liberalism as a principle of government.

The subject that Marc Plattner addresses is the state of democracy, and the democratic idea, in the years that have followed the end of communism. And the release of *Democracy Without Borders* is well timed. Once again, critics have begun to doubt whether a government of free institutions is viable for all cultures and to question the wisdom, and even the morality, of an American policy to expand democratic freedoms to countries under autocratic rule.

While the proposition that (as more than one critic has put it) "democracy is not for everyone" has not won majority endorsement, it is certainly up for debate.

Democracy Without Borders is a collection of essays written by Plattner since 1992, when he became founding editor of the *Journal of Democracy*, a publication of the National Endowment for Democracy. Plattner's analysis is measured and clearly articulated. Though not a polemicist—indeed, he goes out of his way to give all sides their due—Plattner does have strong opinions, which are reinforced by his ability to distinguish between facts

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and real trends on the one hand and superficial theorizing on the other.

Thus, he dismisses claims that Western liberal democracy faces significant competition from either a Chinese or a Russian model. While China has gained considerable influence in East Asia and other parts of the world—a development that, in itself, should concern us—Plattner stresses that no country is emulating its unique blend of Leninist political control and state-driven capitalism.

Likewise, while Plattner calls Russia's autocratic course "the gravest setback for democracy in the post-Cold War era," he rejects the very idea that a Russian "model" exists at all. While Russian officials have concocted phrases like "sovereign democracy" to describe the system that has evolved under Vladimir Putin, Plattner correctly insists that the essence of Putinism is simply the accumulation of power by the leader and his associates.

Plattner is also unimpressed by the contention, most notably identified with Fareed Zakaria, that elections and democracy can actually *undermine* freedom and security in certain societies, especially those with ethnic or religious differences. First postulated a decade ago, the "illiberal democracy" theory has acquired new credibility in the wake of the coming to power *via* elections of Hamas and the more recent, and thoroughly tragic, events in Kenya.

Yet Plattner's argument remains convincing even in light of these setbacks. Where, he asks, are the "wise and benevolent" despots whose rule will be more effective, and humane, than would be the case under conditions of democracy? Fareed Zakaria, he notes, could muster just one example of a polity in which good government and civil liberties went hand in hand with unelected leadership: Hong Kong under British rule. He adds that, in ethnically mixed African societies, the usual practice was for one group to dominate the others through repression and without niceties like freedom of the press or the rule of law.

A bride casts her ballot in Lebanon, 2005

HAITHAM MUSSAWI / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

Furthermore, Plattner notes that far more often than they have contributed to civil strife, elections have actually played a significant role in resolving civil wars, pointing to such disparate locales as Liberia, Nicaragua, and Mozambique.

While Plattner is unimpressed by the illiberal democracy theory, he takes seriously the threat to democracy—or, at least, democracy as we understand it—posed by the erosion of national sovereignty that is the inevitable byproduct of globalization. He predicts a coming divide between those, especially in America, who support the traditions of liberal internationalism, with its emphasis on cooperation between sovereign states, and globalists, who are increasingly pressing for the creation of supranational institutions with the authority to override the democratically-arrived-at decisions of nation-states.

Plattner believes that this emerging debate between traditional liberal internationalists and the advocates of a new globalized internationalism will have profound implications for the future of democracy, self-rule, and accountability. On the one hand, globalists believe that the world's transnational problems—terrorism, AIDS, drugs, climate change—should be dealt with through networks in which international agencies, transnational nongovernmental organizations, and sovereign states, each compete for power and authority. For the globalists, the nation-state enjoys less moral authority than does global civil society.

While this new kind of internationalism has gained adherents, especially in Europe, it has been rejected in the United States. Plattner pointedly refutes the proposition that America acts as a rogue superpower that ignores universal principles and multilateralism. To the contrary: Americans, he says, are committed to universal ideals of democracy and human rights, but "hold that their implementation should be the business of democratically elected and accountable national governments."

He adds that Americans will firmly resist the surrender of sovereignty to international bodies whose decisions are influenced by dictatorships and autocracies. It is for this reason, and not due to a rejection of universal norms, that the United States has declined to ratify the various climate change agreements, or the International Criminal Court.

Though he doesn't directly say

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so, it is, one suspects, in part due to America's belief that sovereignty is integral to democracy that Plattner remains confident about the future strength of American democratic institutions, despite the current high level of polarization and the country's involvement in an unpopular war—a war, he notes, that has damaged the ability of the United States to mount an effective democracy promotion policy.

He is, by contrast, less certain about democracy's future in Europe, in part due to a democracy deficit in the functioning of the European Union, and in part due to its difficulty in integrating non-European immigrants and a potentially severe demographic crisis that looms in the coming decades.

Plattner warns that the ability of Europe to grapple with its emerging "diversity" dilemma is hampered by the increasing influence of a corrosive form of multiculturalism that demands a subordination of national identity, and democratic governance, to a "oneness" with immigrants. He also expresses doubts that the EU, with its emphasis on law and negotiation over force, will be capable of coping with states like Russia that are animated by traditional power politics.

Plattner's reasoned and basically optimistic argument is particularly important at a moment of confusion about democracy's condition and *schadenfreude* over the failings of the Bush administration's efforts to bring freedom to the Middle East. There is, Plattner contends, no emerging alternative to liberal democracy, save for the dead-end idea of anti-Americanism. Democracy's current distress is due to the increased repression of current autocrats, not the repudiation of freedom by the new democracies.

Equally important are his admonitions about the dangers to democracy in a "borderless" world. In the 21st century, Plattner seems to say, threats to democracy can come from both traditional despots and the benevolent advocates of global governance. ♦

Ferrara for Me

The understated charm of the 'first modern city.'

BY ANN MARLOWE

After three decades of visits to Italy, I stumbled upon the perfect small Italian city. It's a wonderfully livable haven which offers the best case for the Italian way of life, as lived in exquisite surroundings—not uncommon in Italy—but with a rare civility and sense of the common good.

It has a long history of violence and despotism—in 1264 it was the first free Italian city to cede its liberty to what would today be called a warlord—but also of enlightened city planning, art, and intellectual endeavor. Tasso wrote his *Jerusalem Delivered* here, and Ariosto his *Orlando Furioso.* Antonioni was born here and, until recently, had a museum devoted to him. Because it was planned, Jakob Burckhardt called it the "first modern city" of Europe: Ferrara, a gem of the 14th and 15th centuries.

The gently curving streets of small earth-toned town houses are interrupted every few blocks by a 14th-century palace or austere Romanesque church that would merit guidebook notice in many towns but doesn't even make the tourist map here. There are a few major buildings and museums to visit—the Castelle Estense (Este Castle), the Cathedrale, Palazzo Schifanoia, and the Pinacoteca Nazionale—but, mainly, Ferrara is to be enjoyed, and explored over a leisurely couple of days. A college town—the university was founded in 1391—it is full of bookstores and offers an alarming number of cultural activities.

Overshadowed by its larger neighbor, Bologna, a half-hour away, Ferrara is virtually untouristed. I had been to Bologna two or three times before I first visited Ferrara this past summer. It's a UNESCO World Heritage city, but you can stand in front of the cathedral at 10 in the morning and see not a busload of tourists but small clusters of older Ferrarese men, well-dressed, standing by their bicycles and chatting with each other.

This brings me to another of Ferrara's virtues: It's a cyclist's dream. Compact and flat, Ferrara has one of the highest rates of bike use in Europe: Thirty-one percent of its citizens use them to get around. Many Italian towns are plagued by incessant traffic noise—and the ambient anxiety of being smeared against an exquisite medieval stone wall by one of the cars careening down a ten-foot wide road never meant for motor traffic. In Ferrara, you can walk and think, rather than dodging scooters and cars.

Your hotel will give you a free one-speed, but if you want something fancier, you can rent high-quality hybrid bikes for eight euros a day. And if you can only spend a day in Ferrara, you should first bicycle around to get a feel for the place. The city grew north from the bank of the Po River, and the bottom third, clearly demarcated by Corso della Giovacca, is the medieval quarter. The streets here are winding and narrow, while north of Corso della Giovacca they are straighter and wider. A series of planned 15th-century expansions brought the city to its current pentagonal shape.

If you've overdosed elsewhere on Baroque, you may find Ferrara's pre-Renaissance monuments refreshing. The 14th-century palaces and churches have a serene, unself-conscious confidence that evokes a less complicated, if not less bloody, world. Several of the churches were founded much earlier, and a few have been reconstructed, either because they were tampered with

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Two bicycles, one car, by the campanile

or, in one or two cases, damaged by bombing raids in World War II.

Bike around the Castello Estense, begun in 1385, one of the few moated castles left in Europe, or inspect the richly ornamented façade of the cathedral, begun in 1135. Leon Battista Alberti is said to have designed the unfinished bell tower, or campanile, which is around the corner on the right. The façade of the Palazzo del Comune, or Town Hall, opposite the cathedral, was designed in 1300s style in the 1920s, but the building behind it *does* date to the 13th century.

The palazzo of Renata di Francia, a French princess who wed an Este, is now a university building, while Casa Romei, a rich merchant's richly frescoed house, is now a small museum. And it's located on a street named for no less than Savonarola, who was born near Casa Romei in 1452 and attended the local university before becoming a friar and then the Mullah Omar of 15th-century Florence.

Make your way gradually to the stern brick façade of Palazzo Schiafanoia, dating from the late 1300s. (The name of this former Este family residence is a contraction of *schivar la noia*, or "banish boredom.") It was closed for restoration when I visited, but the frescoed *salone dei mesi* of the late 15th century are the main attraction. Then double back to the Castello and follow Corso Ercole I d'Este past the municipal buildings—all old palaces worth a look—to museum row. There's a museum devoted to the Risorgimento and Resistance, and the Pinacoteca Nazionale, housed in the striking Palazzo dei Diamanti (*circa* 1500). The R&R is weak on the Resistance (surprise!), with one scanty vitrine devoted to the destruction of the Jewish community, but the Pinacoteca is worth visiting if you can spend more than one day, or are a particular fan of the Ferrarese school.

The "right" side of town as you look at the map is the best side all the way up. Towards the Corso Isonzo things get less interesting, with 20th-century buildings and what seems to be the wrong side of the tracks. On the left is the old Jewish quarter—well, let's be honest, the ghetto, since Jews were locked in nightly from the time Ferrara came under papal rule in 1598 until 1859, the birth of Italy as a modern state. This was centered around what's now Via Vignatagliata and Via Vittorio, and a plaque on the synagogue commemorates the death of 92 Ferrarese Jews during the Fascist period. (Giorgio Bassani, a Ferrarese, set *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis* here. The hero gets around by bicycle.)

To fill in the details of city history and the Estes, visit Castello Estense. A thorough look will take about two hours, but the visitor with less passion for history may want to skim some of the texts (English and Italian in most cases). The main appeal is the handful of rooms with magnificently frescoed 15th-century ceilings, and provided with mirrors to prevent neck strain! In two days, you can add the pinacoteca. I am not a big fan of the Ferrarese school, and found the vaunted small Mantegna, with blood-red *putti*, awful, but I did enjoy discovering the gravely naturalistic Saint Petronius (1473) of the Ferrarese Ercole Roberti and the Annunciation by Domenico Paretti, another favorite son.

If you get tired of biking in a cityscape, head for the Jewish cemetery, then take a left onto a gravel road that leads first to a working (private) farm and then to the 15th-16th century city walls. You can bike around the perimeter of the old city on a wide gravel path,

GIADA RIPA DI MEANA

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guided by small signs to noteworthy fortifications or special wildflowers.

The feel of Ferrara is different from the more refined towns of Tuscany. It's much less given to an Italian trait my French friend calls *herdisme*, as in herd behavior. *Herdisme* is reflected in the way Italians all do everything in groups, at the same time, wearing the same clothing styles. (They also tend to do it loudly, which is another story.) This can be quite annoying, if you happen to be caught in one of the seasonal movements of the herd, and it can also remind you that, in some ways, Italy is a Third World country, with the usual Third World preference for group over individual activities, custom over novelty, and rote repetition over independent thought.

But *herdisme*'s flip side is civility, accommodation to others, and a sense of the common good. This does not seem much in evidence in large southern Italian cities like Rome and Naples, but northern cities like Turin, Parma, and Ferrara have it in spades. Maybe it's an artifact of living in close quarters: The relative population density of Italy—a country the size of Georgia and Florida combined—is 490 people per square mile, while 38 of our states have under 200 per square mile. In Ferrara, the acculturation to close quarters has been honed over the centuries to the point where individual freedom and the good of the community seem perfectly reconciled. I am pretty sure this illusion would dissolve if I actually lived in Ferrara, but it's worth glimpsing and thinking about.

Ferrara seems more reflective and cerebral than most Italian cities. Of course, being Italian, it is stylish, but the operant aesthetic would be a man in a beautiful custom-made shirt bicycling with a basket full of books. It's not a racy city, but neither is it as smugly bourgeois as Parma. When I arrived, the annual weeklong Buskers Festival had just ended. I wasn't sorry to have missed the street performers I try to avoid all in one place for a week, but I would happily return on the last Sunday in May for the annual Palio, the oldest in the world, held since 1259, which is run around the oval-shaped Piazza Ariostea. The official website notes that this Palio "is peculiar for its kind of ride that is *joyful* and so different from other *warlike palii*. In these last there are always enemy that you have to fight with the lance."

The local cuisine, uncorrupted by tourism, is very good, though not as voluptuously good as in Naples or the less visited towns of Umbria or Tuscany. The distinctive contribution of the Estes was a tradition of combining sweet and savory in the same dish. Of the two pastas of this sort, I found the maccheroni ferrarese—like Greek pastitio, with béchamel and meat sauce over macaroni—something of a bore, but capelliti, tender little ravioli stuffed with sweet pumpkin puree in a tart tomato and meat sauce, were more satisfying. *Pampapato*, a chocolate-covered chocolate and fruit-flavored cake is the city's trademark dish. It's better than most fruitcakes, but I preferred the *cioccolato con peperoncino* gelato from the proudly artisanal Venchi, founded in 1878, opposite the *cathedrale*.

Today's inhabitants are polite and open, without the sneering passive-aggressiveness of some Italian towns that have been in the tourist business too long, or the country suspiciousness of more out-of-the-way places. For the first time in my life, the manager of one of the hotels I stayed at (the Ripagrande) told me to forget about the bottled water I took from the minibar; it was on the house!

But why stay in a hotel when you can move in? I went to one real estate agency just for laughs and asked about the rent on a historic house in the *centro storico*—say, four bedrooms, outdoor space, a nice place.

"Seven hundred, 800 euros," was the answer. My jaw dropped. You may look for me here soon. ♦

Feudal to Translate

A guide to the English dialect spoken only in China.

BY ABIGAIL LAVIN

Virginia Woolf once wrote that "humor is the first gift to perish in a foreign language."

Of course, Mrs. Woolf couldn't know about 21st-century Shanghai, where people communicate in a foreign language to side-splitting effect, day after day. The foreign language, in this case, is English—or more accurately, "Chinglish." This term means different things to different people, but for the purposes of Oliver Lutz Radtke's new book, it refers to the delightfully awkward, syntax-defying, and at times purple prose found on English-language signs, clothing, and packaging in China. Radtke, a German sinologist, first came up with the idea for a book on Chinglish while studying at Shanghai Foreign Languages University.

Chinglish
Found in Translation
by Oliver Lutz Radtke
Gibbs Smith, 112 pp., $7.95

Like Radtke, I, too, find myself tickled by the abundant examples of not-quite-English to be found in China. As I write, I am sitting in an upscale wine bar in downtown Shanghai. Janis Joplin is playing softly in the background, and in the din of other patrons' conversation I can make out French, Chinese, and, of course, English. A sign hangs in the doorway: "Take care of your belongings before you leave the restaurants."

So far as I can tell, Chinglish falls into two categories: instrumental and ornamental. Instrumental Chinglish is actually intended to convey information to English speakers. Ornamental

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Chinglish is born of the fact that English is the *lingua franca* of coolness. Meaning aside, any combination of roman letters elevates a commodity—khaki pants, toilet paper, potato chips—to a higher plane of chic by suggesting that the product is geared toward an international audience.

In Hong Kong I once saw a teenage girl wearing a red baby-doll T-shirt emblazoned with rhinestone lettering that read: "mom, i'm a lesbian." In wearing this T-shirt, the young lady probably did not intend to announce her homosexuality to her mother—or to the world, for that matter. The English on her shirt served a decorative function; the letters were intended to convey no more meaning than paisley or houndstooth.

Similarly, I have in my purse a packet of moist towelettes called "HARASS" wipes. It is possible that the manufacturers wish to associate their brand with harassment as a marketing strategy, but it is more likely that a mid-level executive in Wuhan saw the word "harass" in the blurb of a pirated DVD copy of the 2002 Jennifer Lopez thriller *Enough* and thought that it looked to be as good a word as any to slap on a pack of towelettes.

As for instrumental Chinglish, look no further than bustling People's Square, the heart of Shanghai. The neighborhood swarms with foreign tourists, any one of whom might be curious about the history of beautiful People's Park. Recognizing that a good chunk of those who pass through People's Park may not speak Chinese, the Shanghai Municipality on Administration of Public Parks has thoughtfully provided the following English signage:

> Intrudaction Park
>
> People's Park built in 1952 Beginning re built on 2000FEB. And opening on July 1. Thearea of the part is 10million/mIt is keep old Haiting Park. Characteristic. It has new Yulan park. Health park and Founcain. and so on.

This illuminating intrudaction is followed by a list of "Rulers for visitors." Some highlights:

> • . . . public meeting or fund-raising Of any nature is inexpedient, activities of a feudalistic and superstitious nature . . . are not allowed
>
> • Visitors are not supposed to tease, scare, or capture bird, cricket, fish and shrimp or cicada (exceptthose for community purposes).
>
> • Ethic and moral codes should be duly honored, visitors are expected not to urinate or shit . . .

Like all great specimens of literature, these "Rulers for visitors" excite the reader's imagination, opening the mind to new possibilities and questions. Would it be possible to concurrently break all three of the rules listed above? Surely there is something feudalistic to be done with crickets, but urinating or defecating might be difficult to work into the mix.

Unfettered from the constraint of *knowing* English, many Chinese take the language to new heights. A local seafood joint, Fishiness Infinitude, is a prime example. I defy anyone to visit this establishment and come up with a more appropriate name.

Of course, Chinglish is not always so charming. Scandal broke out last year when it was discovered that a line of couches made in China came affixed with an English label that used a racial slur to describe the upholstery's dark brown color. The manufacturer blamed Kingsoft, a Chinese software company that makes a popular Chinese-English translation program. Doris Moore, a Toronto woman whose seven-year-old daughter discovered the offending label on the family's new sofa, wondered, "Don't they read it first? Doesn't the manufacturer? The supplier?"

Indeed, in Shanghai, a polyglot city with no shortage of agile translators and editors, why are so many mistakes published, engraved, and illumined in neon lights for the world to see? Radtke offers a few possible explanations. One has to do with pride: Outsourcing English translation to a native English-speaker would mean losing face. Another culprit is online translation software. These matrixes often translate too literally from the Chinese, resulting in rest room signs for the handicapped that read: "Deformed Man Toilet." Or as in the case of the Kingsoft scandal, one errant definition proliferates due to the software's popularity.

But the explanation I find most compelling is the ornamental Chinglish theory: Content just isn't that important. The goal is not to convey information in English; it is to convey that you are conveying information in English. One analogy is that some Westerners have gotten themselves engraved with trendy Chinese character tattoos. The tattoos may be gibberish, or worse, but they all mean the same thing: "I have a Chinese character tattooed on my body." (This phenomenon—perhaps we can call it "Engese"—deserves a guidebook of its own.)

Sadly, as Radtke points out, Chinglish may soon be a thing of the past. Beijing is undergoing a great revamping in preparation for this summer's Olympic Games, and instructive examples of Chinglish are being whitewashed from the capital faster than you can say "mom, i'm a lesbian."

If, as Radtke believes, Chinglish is an endangered species, then this little volume is a gem of a time capsule. For quick perusal, *Chinglish* will occupy you for a risible, fully satisfying five minutes; for an in-depth analysis of Chinglish, you should delve into Radtke's helpful list of "Recommended Reading." But if you're looking for a punchline on every page, *Chinglish* fits the bill. ♦

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Genius on Parade

Einstein comes to America. **BY EDWIN M. YODER JR.**

You must, perhaps, have been born no later than 1940 to recall the exalted standing Albert Einstein enjoyed in American popular myth. He died in 1955 and left no successor, not even the ill-fated "father of the atomic bomb," J. Robert Oppenheimer.

A brief personal memory: In the early winter of 1953, initiates of the freshman honorary Phi Eta Sigma at Chapel Hill were addressed by Dr. Archibald Henderson, retired professor of mathematics, authorized biographer of George Bernard Shaw, and (to the present point) friend and interpreter of Dr. Einstein. Dr. Henderson was said to be one of the 12 people in the world who understood Relativity. When his dazzling and erudite address ended, a half-dozen of us retired to decide what he had said and write a collaborative account for the student newspaper. Such was the mystique of the new physics in that more innocent age.

Albert Meets America
How Journalists Treated Genius During Einstein's 1921 Travels
Edited by József Illy
Johns Hopkins, 320 pp., $29.95

Albert Meets America is a documentary chronicle, drawn from newspaper accounts, of a signal episode in the building of the Einstein legend: the great physicist's first visit to America in the spring of 1921. He came with Dr. Chaim Weizmann and others to raise funds for the Zionist enterprise, and specifically for the new Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

At the time, the present configuration of the Middle East was unformed, in flux. The Arab Revolt had helped the British drive the Turks from Palestine and, at Versailles, the British had assumed a Palestinian "mandate" that would prove far more troublesome than anyone then imagined. But hopes were high. Dr. Weizmann's work on high explosives in the Great War—he was popularly, if rather inexactly, identified as "the inventor of TNT"—had helped win the Balfour Declaration.

But it was not Weizmann, the stolid Manchester chemist, but Einstein the mathematical magus (surely the word fits) who captured most of the headlines as the Zionist party shuttled among New York, Philadelphia, Washington, Chicago, Boston, and Hartford. Einstein lectured (at the City College of New York and at Princeton, which awarded him an honorary degree) and was lionized and interviewed by an awed press and public.

His moxie was extraordinary. The Theory of Relativity, general and special, was for lay people a mystery from the abstract realm of bodies moving at or near the speed of light, epitomized in the most famous of physical formulae: $E=mc^2$. Its implications for the common-sense world were elusive, although it inspired learned speculation about the nature of gravity and the shape and size of the universe. Elusiveness, however, merely intensified public fascination. It was, again, a fixed superstition, a canard that refused to yield to Einstein's own laughing demurrers, that "only" a dozen earthly highbrows understood Relativity. (In Brooklyn there was discovered a 16-year-old lad who made 13!)

As usual, when the esoteric stirs popular fascination, the subtext is unease. This usually took the form of jokey references to Dr. Einstein's appearance and manner. His hair, his eyes, his posture, speech, and dress (even his floppy, outsized hat, which blew off on Seventh Avenue in Manhattan and was "athletically" chased down by Dr. Einstein himself) were objects of remark. The intimation was that this theorist of the Fourth Dimension of space/time was, after all, homely and unthreatening. It was a relief to find that the "father" of Relativity (as if the good doctor had collaborated with the Creator on Day One to stage the Big Bang) was a jolly, elfin figure with long, curly locks and soft eyes who resembled more a Bohemian musician or painter than a dangerous Dr. Frankenstein.

But on the evidence displayed here, the pawky effort of newspaper scribes to convey the subtleties of Relativity were a princely waste of paper and ink. Rarely in this heaping blizzard of old clippings, retrieved by their editor from the Einstein archive, does one encounter any engaging popularization: nothing at all like Lincoln Barnett's *The Universe and Dr. Einstein*, a lucid exposition of the 1950s. In the spring of 1921 most of the reporting was, with rare exceptions, coy and patronizing, although in *The Freeman* Gertrude Besse King wrote perceptively, and with Shakespearean overtones:

> It is the necromancy of these strange theories, not their science, that catches the gaping crowd. Reporters … instinctively … know that most of us are essentially children still clamoring for fairy tales … restless with the prison-house of this too, too solid world.

There was occasional worry about the ethical implications of the Einstein theory. It implied that there was no fixed "hitching post" in the universe which, though finite, had no boundaries, space/time being curvilinear. But philosophers assured their fretful audiences that Relativity was no threat to moral truth; and there were no fulminations (none, at least, recorded here) from holy-roller pulpits. America was struggling manfully to make friends with modern science.

This book is a good idea, but would have been better had it been more selectively edited. As it stands, the reader must hack his way through wildernesses of lists, long-forgotten names, and endlessly duplicated schedules of greeting and reception. If both the *New York Times* and the *New York Post* reported the same events, the editor democratically includes both overlapping accounts. At half the length this could have been a more reader-friendly chronicle. ♦

Edwin M. Yoder Jr. is a former editor and columnist in Washington.

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Parody

"In my first book,* Dreams From My Father, *I described the experience of my first service at Trinity:

> ***'People began to shout, to rise from their seats and clap and cry out, a forceful wind carrying the reverend's voice up into the rafters. . . . And in that single note—hope!—I heard something else; at the foot of that cross, inside the thousands of churches across the city, I imagined the stories of . . . ' "***

—From Sen. Barack Obama's speech in Philadelphia, March 18

Among the Hawaiians

uffer the wrath of Michelle
ire and tongue of flame.

t cry went up from them
ke to them saying,

o the Mighty;
y no Hunger,
panded Cable

erstand the poor,
t one Television
ot High-Definition;

riots of great age,
at are wanton
g much Wine.

owds turned away,
peak, Speak!

George died I saw
upon a throne,
Temple.

eraphims:
with twain
yet agan
he did fly.

other,
Hosts:
is Glory.

r moved
d, Go,
indeed.

e hem
r sick
n and

He embraceth His destiny

OBAMA 6, 7

tearing at His garments, and clutching His Book of Dreams to their bosom, they fell into supplication at His feet, and listened for the Word;

18 And Obama, hearing the lamentations of the women, and the songs of the scribes that were heard throughout the Nation, then retired to the house of the carpenter to await the word of One who had guided him along the path from the Islands through the Groves of Academe and unto the councils in the Land of Lincoln, where He tarried with the money changers; and unto the Nation's Capital.

19 Forasmuch as He had sworn to consecrate His life to the service of His Nation, so now the angels showered Him with coins; and Obama gave His consent; and a message was delivered to the elders that He would seek the anointment, and deliver His People from the grasp of the Rodhamites, who were boastful and besotted with the wine of praise.

20 And Obama beheld the multitudes, and saw that they were sore afraid, and bereft of Hope;

21 And so He climbed upon a rock, which was high on the Capitoline Hill, where the Kossites and the Bloggers and Obama Girl and yea, even the remnants of the tribe of the McGovernites, who had once been slain in great numbers in the old days, all had gathered and could see His face and bathe in the splendor of His voice.

CHAPTER 7

AND ONCE HE HAD PREPARED HIS FEAST OF WORDS, AND THE DISCIPLES had come unto Him, and the scribes with their tablets stood beside the rock with their mouths agape, He taught them, saying,

2 I proclaim unto you that Ye are the ones that we have awaited throughout the generations; and at these words they raised a cry of ecstasy and wept like babes.

3 And Obama said, Forasmuch as ye hath called me, I will unify all the tribes, and I will banish all fear, and give ye Hope.

4 And then Obama said, Blessed are those without insurance, for they shall be covered and shall not be cast down by the Deductibles;

5 And then Obama said, Blessed are the Ordinary people who hath done Extraordinary things, and those who shall Disagree and yet not be Disagreeable; for they shall have a place in the councils of my White House.

6 And when He had said these things, Obama and the children

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